

DE L'ORME.

BY THE AUTHOR OF .

RICHELIEU," AND " DARNLEY."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

It has been pointed out to the Author of this book, that one passage of it contains a story similar to a tale that has already appeared. On reading the work alluded to, he certainly finds a resemblance, but not such, either in matter or manner, as to induce him to change what he has written, even if it were not too late to make any alteration.

Such similarities must ever occasionally occur, as in this instance perfectly unwittingly ; but, as the Author feels convinced that this Novel can do no possible harm to the talented writer to whose work he refers, and that the comparison can only be disadvantageous to himself, he has no scruple in letting the tale go forth to the Public as it was originally written.



DE L'ORME.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS born in the heart of Bearn, in the year 1619; and if the scenery amongst which we first open our eyes, and from which we receive our earliest impressions, could communicate its own peculiar character to our minds, I should certainly have possessed a thousand great and noble qualities, that would have taught me to play a part, very different from that which I have done, in the great tragic farce of human life. Nevertheless, in contemplating the strange contrasts of scenery, the gay, the sparkling, the grand, the gloomy, the sublime, wherein my infant yea were passed, I have often thought

I saw a sort of picture of my own fate, with its abrupt and rapid changes; and even in some degree of my own character, or rather of my own mood, varying continually through all the different shades of disposition, from the lightest mirth to the most profound gloom, from the idlest heedlessness to the most anxious thought.

However, it is not my own peculiar character that I sit down to depict—that will be sufficiently displayed in the detail of my adventures: but it is rather those strange and singular events which, contrary to all probability, mingled me with great men, and with great actions, and which, continually counter-acting my own will, impelled me ever, on the very opposite course from that which I struggled to pursue.

For many reasons, it is necessary to commence this narrative with those early years, wherein the mind of man receives its first bias, when the seeds of all our future actions are sown in the heart, and when causes, in themselves so trifling as almost to be imperceptible, chain us to good or bad, to fortune

or misfortune for ever. The character of man is like a piece of potter's clay, which, when fresh and new, is easily fashioned according to the will of those into whose hands it falls; but its form once given and hardened, either by the slow drying of time, or by its passage through the ardent furnace of the world, and one may break it to atoms, but never bend it again to another mould.

Our parents, our teachers, our companions, all serve to modify our dispositions. The very proximity of their faults, their failings, or their virtues, leaves, as it were, an impress on the flexible mind of infancy, which the steadiest reason can hardly do more than modify, and years themselves can never erase.

To begin, then, with the beginning; I was, as I have said, born in the heart of the little mountainous principality of Bearn, which, stretching along the northern side of the Pyrenees, contains within itself, some of the most fertile and some of the most picturesque, some of the sweetest and some of the grandest scenes, that any part of Europe can boast. The chain

of my native mountains, interposing between France and Spain, forms a gigantic wall whereby the unerring hand of Nature has marked the limits of either land; and although this immense bulwark is, in itself, scarcely broken by any, but very narrow and difficult passes, yet the mountainous ridges which it sends off, like enormous buttresses, into the plain country on each side, are intersected by a number of wide and beautiful valleys, rich with all the gifts of summer, and glowing with all the loveliness of bright fertility.

One of the most striking, though perhaps not one of the most extensive, of these valleys, is that which, running from east to west, lies in a direct line between Bagnerre de Bigorre and the little town and castle of Lourdes. Never have I seen, and certainly never shall I now see, a valley so sweet, so fair, so tranquil;—never, one so bright in itself, or so surrounded by objects of grandeur and magnificence. I need not say after this, that it was my native place.

The dwelling of my father, Roger de L'Orme, Count de Bigorre, was perched up high upon

the hill-side, about two miles from Lourdes, and looked far over all the splendid scene below. The wide valley, with its rich carpet of verdure, the river dashing in liquid diamonds amidst the rocks and over the precipices; the long far windings of the deep purple mountains, filling the mind with vague, but grand imaginings; the dark majestic shadows of the pine forests that every here and there were cast like a black mantle round the enormous limbs of each giant hill; the long wavy perspective of the passes towards Cauteretz, and the Pont d'Espagne, with the icy Vigne Malle raising up his frozen head, as if to dare the full power of the summer sun beyond,—all was spread out to the eye, offering in one grand view a thousand various sorts of loveliness.

I must be pardoned for dilating upon those sweet scenes of my early childhood, whose very memory bestows a calm and placid joy, which I have never found in any other spot, or in any other feeling; neither in the gaiety and splendour of a court, the gratification of passion, the hurry and energy of political intrigue,

the excitement and triumph of the battle-field, the struggle of conflicting hosts, or the maddening thrill of victory—But for a moment, let me indulge, and then I quit such memories for things and circumstances whose interest is more easily communicable to the minds of others.

The château in which my eyes first opened to the light, was little inferior in size to the castle of Lourdes, and infinitely too large for the small establishment of servants and retainers which my father's reduced finances enabled him to maintain. Our diminished household looked within its enormous walls, like the shrunken form of some careful old miser, insinuated into the wide and hanging garments of his youth; and yet my excellent parent fondly insisted upon as much pomp and ceremony as his own father had kept up with an hundred and fifty retainers waiting in his hall. Still the trumpet sounded at the hour of dinner, though the weak lungs of the broken-winded old *maître d'hôtel* produced but a cacophonous sound from the hollow brass: still all the servants, who amount-

ed to five, including the gardener, the shepherd, and the cook, were drawn up at the foot of the staircase, in unstarched ruffs and tarnished liveries of green and gold, while my father, with slow and solemn pace, handed down to dinner Madame la Comtesse ; still would he talk of his vassals, and his seigneurial rights, though his domain scarce covered five hundred acres of wood and mountain, and vassals, God knows, he had but few. However, the banners still hung in the hall ; and it was impossible to gaze upon the walls, the pinnacles, the towers, and the battlements of the old castle, without attaching the idea of power and influence to the lord of such a hold ; so that it was not extraordinary he himself should, in some particulars, forget the decay of his house, and fancy himself as great as his ancestors.

A thousand excellent qualities of the heart covered any little foibles in my father's character. He was liberal to a fault ; kind, with that minute and discriminating benevolence which weighs every word ere it be spoken, lest it should hurt the feelings of another ; brave, to

that degree that scarcely believes in fear, yet at the same time so humane that his sympathy with others often proved the torture of his own heart; but ——

Oh! that in this world there should still be a *but*, to qualify every thing that is good and excellent! — but, still he had one fault that served greatly to counteract all the high qualities which he possessed. He was invincibly lazy in mind. He could endure nothing that gave him trouble; and, though the natural quickness of his disposition would lead him to purpose a thousand great undertakings, yet long ere the time came for executing them, various little obstacles and impediments had gradually worn down his resolution; or else the trouble of thinking about one thing for long was too much for him, and the enterprise dropped by its own weight. Had fortune brought him great opportunities, no one would have seized them more willingly, or used them to better and to nobler purposes; but fortune was to seek—and he did nothing.

The wars of the League, in which his father

had taken a considerable part, had gradually lopped away branch after branch of our estates, and even hewn deeply into the trunk ; and my father was not a man, either by active enterprise or by court intrigue, to mend the failing fortunes of his family. On the contrary, after having served in two campaigns, and distinguished himself in several battles, out of pure weariness, he retired to our château of de l'Orme, where, being once fixed in quiet, he passed the rest of his days, never having courage to undertake a longer journey than to Pau, or to Tarbes ; and forming in his solitude a multitude of fine and glorious schemes, which fell to nothing almost in the same moment that they were erected : as we may see a child build up, with a pack of cards, many a high and ingenious structure, which the least breath of air will instantly reduce to the same flat nonentities, from which they were reared at the first.

My mother's character is soon told. It was all excellence ; or, if there was, indeed, in its composition, one drop of that evil, from which human nature is probably never entirely free,

it consisted in a touch of family pride—and yet, while I write it, my heart reproaches me, and says that it was not so. However, the reader shall judge by the sequel; but if she had this fault, it was her only one, and all the rest was virtue and gentleness. Restricted as were her means of charity, still every one that came within the sphere of her influence experienced her kindness, or partook of her bounty. Nor was her charity alone the charity that gives; it was the charity that feels, that excuses, that forgives.

A willing aid in all that was amiable and benevolent was to be found in good Father Francis of Allurdi, the chaplain of the château. In his young days, they said, he had been a soldier, and on some slight, received from a world for which he was too good, he threw away the corslet and took the gown, not with the feeling of a misanthrope, but of a philanthropist. For many years he remained as curé, at the little village of Allurdi, in the Val d'Osseau; but his sight and his strength both failing him, and the cure being an arduous

one, he resigned it to a younger man, (who, he thought, might better perform the duties of the station,) and brought as gentle a heart, and as pure a spirit, as ever rested in a mortal frame, to dwell with the two others I have described in the château de l'Orme.

It may be asked, if he too had his foible? Believe me, dear reader, whoever thou art, that every one on this earth has; nor was he without it: and, strange as it may appear, his was superstition — I say, strange as it may appear, for he was a man of a strong and vigorous mind, calm, reflective, rational, without any of that hurried and perturbed indistinctness of judgment, which suffers imagination to usurp the place of reason. But still he was superstitious to a great degree, affording a striking instance of that union of opposite qualities, which every one who takes the trouble of examining his own bosom, will find more or less exemplified in himself. His superstition, however, grew in a mild and benevolent soil, and was indeed but as one of those tender climbing plants, which hang upon the

ruined tower or the shattered oak, and clothe them with a verdure not their own: thus he fondly adhered to the imaginative tenets of ancient days fast falling into decay. He peopled the air with spirits, and in his fancy gave them visible shapes, and, in some degree, even corporeal qualities. However, on an ardent and youthful mind like mine, such picturesque superstitions were most likely to have effect; and so far indeed did they influence me, that though reason in after life exerted her power to sweep them all away, imagination often rebelled, and clung fondly to the delusion still.

Such as I have described them were the denizens of the Château de l'Orme at the time of my birth, which was unmarked by any other peculiarity than that of my mother having been married, and yet childless, for more than eight years. The joy which the unexpected birth of an heir produced, may easily be imagined, though little indeed was the inheritance which I came to claim. All with one consent gave themselves up to hope and to gladness, and

more substantial signs of rejoicing were displayed in the hall than the château had known for many a day.

My father declared that I should infallibly retrieve the fortunes of my house. Father Francis, with tears in his eyes, exclaimed that it was evidently a blessing from Heaven; and even my mother discovered that, though futurity was still misty and indistinct, there was now a landmark to guide on hope across the wide ocean of the years to come.

CHAPTER II.

I KNOW not by what letters patent the privilege is held, but it seems clearly established, that the parents of an only child have full right and liberty to spoil him to whatsoever extent they may please ; and though, my grandfathers on both sides of the house being dead long before my birth, I wanted the usual chief aidors and abettors of over-indulgence ; yet, in consideration of my being an unexpected gift, my father thought himself entitled to expend more unrestrictive fondness upon me, than if my birth had taken place at an earlier period of his marriage.

My education was in consequence somewhat desultory. The persuasions of Father Francis,

indeed, often won me for a time to study, and the wishes of my mother, whose word was ever law to her son, made me perhaps attend to the instructions of the good old Priest more than my natural volatility would have otherwise admitted. At times, too, the mad spirit of laughing and jesting at every thing, which possessed me from my earliest youth, would suddenly and unaccountably be changed into the most profound pensiveness, and reading would become a delight and a relief. I thus acquired a certain knowledge of Latin and of Greek, the first principles of mathematics, and a great many of those absurd and antiquated theories, which were taught in that day, under the name of philosophy. But from Father Francis, also, I learned what should always form one principal branch of a child's education—a very tolerable knowledge of my native language, which I need not say is, in general, spoken in Bearn in the most corrupt and barbarous manner.

Thus, very irregularly, proceeded the course of my mental instruction ; my corporeal education my father took upon himself, and as his

laziness was of the mind rather than the body, he taught me thoroughly, from my very infancy, all those exercises which, according to his conception, were necessary to make a perfect cavalier. I could ride, I could shoot, I could fence, I could wrestle, before I was twelve years old ; and of course the very nature of these lessons tended to harden and confirm a frame originally strong, and a constitution little susceptible of disease.

The buoyancy of youth, the springy vigour of my muscles, and a good deal of imaginative feeling, gave me a sort of indescribable passion for adventure from my childhood, which required even the stimulus of danger to satisfy. Had I lived in the olden time, I had certainly been a knight errant. Every thing that was wild, and strange, and even fearful, was to me delight ; and it needed many a hard morsel from the rough hand of the world, to quell such a spirit's appetite for excitement.

To climb the highest pinnacles of the rocks, to plunge into the deepest caverns, to stand on the very brink of the precipices and look down

into the dizzy void below, to hang above the cataract on some tottering stone, and gaze upon the frantic fury of the river boiling in the pools beneath, till my eye was wearied, and my ear deafened with the flashing whiteness of the stream, and the thundering roar of its fall—these were the enjoyments of my youth, and many, I am afraid, were the anxious pangs which my temerity inflicted on the bosom of my mother.

I will pass over all the little accidents and misadventure of youth, but on one circumstance, which occurred when I was about twelve years old, I must dwell more particularly, inasmuch as it was not only of import at the time, but also affected all my future life by its consequences.

On a fine clear summer morning, I had risen in one of those thoughtful moods, which rarely cloud the sunny mind of youth, but which, as I have said, frequently succeeded to my gayest moments; and, walking slowly down the side of the hill, I took my way through the windings of a deep glen, that led far into the heart

of the mountain. I was well acquainted with the spot, and wandered on almost unconsciously, with scarcely more attention to any external object than a casual glance to the rocks that lay tossed about on either side, amidst a profusion of shrubs and flowers and trees of every hue and leaf.

The path ran along on a high bank of rocks overhanging the river, which dashing in and out round a thousand stony promontories and over a thousand bright cascades, gradually collected its waters into a fuller body, and flowed down in a deep swift stream towards a more profound fall below. At that spot, the most industrious of all the universe's insects, man, had taken advantage of the combination of stream and precipice, and fixed a small mill-wheel under the full jet of water, the clacking sound of which, mingling with the murmur of the stream, and the savage scenery around, communicated strange, undefined sensations to my mind, associating all the cheerful ideas of human proximity, with the wild grandeur of rude uncultivated nature.

I was too young to unravel my feelings, or

trace the sources of the pleasure I experienced ; but getting to the very verge of the rock, a little way above the mill, I stood, watching the dashing eddies as they hurried on to be precipitated down the fall, and listening to the various sounds that came floating on the air.

Why or how, I forget at this moment, but after gazing for some time, I put my foot still farther towards the edge of the rocky stone on which I stood, and bent over to look down the side of the bank. The stone was a detached fragment of gray marble, laying somewhat loosely upon the edge of the descent—my weight overthrew its balance—it tottered—I made a violent effort to recover myself, but in vain—the rock rolled over, and I was pitched headlong into the stream.

The agony of finding myself irretrievably gone—the dazzle and the flash of the water as it closed over my head—the thousand regrets that whirled through my brain during the brief moment that I was below the surface—the struggle of renewed hope as I rose again and beheld the blue sky, and the fair face of nature, are all

as deeply graven on my memory as if it was yesterday. Although all panting when I got my head above the water, I succeeded in uttering a loud shout for assistance, while I struggled to keep myself up with my hand : but as I had never learned to swim, I soon sunk again, and on rising a second time, my strength was so far gone, I could but give voice to a feeble cry, though I saw myself drifting quickly towards the mill and the waterfall, where death seemed inevitable. My only hope was that the miller would hear me ; but, to my dismay, I found that my call, though uttered with all the power I had left, was far too faint to rise above the roar of the cascade and the clatter of the mill-wheels.

Hope gave way, and, ceasing to struggle, I was letting myself sink, when I caught a faint glimpse of some one running down amongst the rocks towards me, but at that moment, in spite of my renewed efforts, the water overwhelmed me again. For an instant there was an intolerable sense of suffocation—a ringing in my ears, and a flashing of light in my eyes that

was very dreadful, but it passed quickly away, and a sweet dreamy sensation came over me, as if I was walking in green fields, I did not well know where—the fear and the struggle was all gone, and gradually losing remembrance of every thing, I seemed to fall asleep.

Such is all that my memory has preserved of the sensations I experienced in drowning—a death generally considered a very dreadful one, but which is, in reality, any thing but painful. We have no means of judging what is suffered in almost any other manner of passing from the world, but were I to speak from what I myself felt in the circumstances I have detailed, I should certainly say that it is the fear that is the death.

My next remembrance is of a most painful tingling, spreading itself through every part of my body, even to my very heart, without any other consciousness of active being, till at length opening my eyes, I found myself lying in a large barely furnished room in the mill, with a multitude of faces gazing at me, some strange and some familiar, amongst the last of which I

perceived the pimpled nose of the old *maître d'hôtel*, and the mild countenance of Father Francis of Allurdi.

My father, too, was there, and I remember seeing him with his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes straining upon me as if his whole soul was in them. When I opened mine, he raised his look towards heaven, and a tear rolled over his cheek ; but I saw or heard little of what passed, for an irresistible sensation of weariness came over me, and the moment after I awoke from the sleep of death, I fell into a quiet and refreshing slumber, very different from the “cold obstruction” of the others.

I will pass over all the rejoicing that signaled my recovery — my father's joy, my mother's thanks and prayers, the servants' carousing, and the potations, deep and strong, of the pimple-nosed *maître d'hôtel*, whose hatred of water never demonstrated itself more strongly than the day after I had escaped drowning. As soon as I had completely regained my strength, my mother told me, that after having shown our gratitude to God, it became our

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duc, to show our gratitude also to the person who had been the immediate means of saving me from destruction ; and it was then I learned that I owed my life to the courage and skill of a lad but little older than myself, the son of a poor procureur, or attorney, at Lourdes. He had been fishing in the stream at the time the rock gave way under my feet, and, seeing my fall, hurried to save me. With much difficulty and danger he accomplished his object, and, having drawn me from the water, carried me to the mill, where he remained only long enough to see me open my eyes, retiring modestly the moment he was assured of my safety.

In those young days, life was to me so bright a plaything, all the wheels of existence moved so easily, there was so much beauty in the world, so much delight in being, that my most enthusiastic gratitude was sure to follow such a service as that I had received. My mother's proposal was willingly assented to, that she should accompany me to Lourdes to offer our thanks—not as with the world in general, in mere empty words, as unsubstantial as the air

that bears them, but by some more lasting mark of our gratitude.

Upon the nature of the recompense she was to offer, she held a long consultation with my father, who, unwilling to give any thing minute consideration, left it entirely to her own judgment, promising the fullest acquiescence in whatever she should think fit ; and accordingly we set out early the next day for Lourdes, my mother mounted on a hawking palfrey, and I riding by her side on a small fleet Limousin horse, which my father had given me a few days before.

This was not, indeed, the equipage with which the Countess de Bigorre should have visited a town once under the dominion of her husband's ancestors ; but what was to be done ? A carriage indeed we had, which would have held six, and if required, eight persons ; though the gilding was somewhat tarnished, and a few industrious spiders had spun their delicate nets in the windows, and between the spokes of the wheels. Neither were horses wanting, for on the side of the mountain were eight coursers, with

tails and manes as long as the locks of a mermaid, and a plentiful supply of hair to correspond about their feet. They were somewhat aged, indeed, and for the last six years they had gone about slip-shod amongst the hills, enjoying the *otium cum dignitate* which neither men nor horses often find. Still they would have done: but, where were we to find the six men dressed in the colours of the family, necessary to protect the foot-board behind? where the four stout cavaliers armed up to the teeth, to ride by the side of the carriage? where the postilions? where the coachman?

My mother did much more wisely than strive for a pomp which we were never to see again. She went quietly and simply, to discharge what she considered a duty,* with as little ostentation as possible; and when the worthy *maître d'hôtel* lamented, with the familiarity of long service, that the Countess de Bigorre should go without such a retinue as in his day had always made the name respected, she replied, quietly, that those who were as proud of the name as she was, would find no retinue needful to make

it respectable. My father retired into his library, as we were about to depart, saying to my mother, that he hoped she had commanded such a body of retainers to accompany her as she thought necessary. She merely replied that she had; and set out, with a single groom to hold the horses, and a boy to show us the way to the dwelling of the Procureur.

Let it be observed, that, up to the commencement of the year of which I speak, Lourdes had never been visited with the plague of an attorney; but at that epoch, the father of the lad who had saved my life, and who, like him, was named Jean Baptiste Arnault, had come to settle in that place, much to the horror and astonishment of the inhabitants. He had, it was rumoured, been originally *Intendant*, or steward, to some nobleman in Poitou, and having, by means best known to himself, obtained the charge of Procureur in Bearn, he had first visited Pau, and thence removed to Lourdes.

The name of an attorney had at first frightened the good Bearnois of that town, but they

soon discovered that Maitre Jean Baptiste Arnault was a very clever, quiet, amiable, little man, about two cubits in height, of which stature, his head monopolized at least the moiety. He was not particularly handsome; but, as he appeared to have other better qualities, that did not much signify, and they gradually made him their friend, their confidant, and their adviser; in all of which capacities, he acted in a mild, tranquil, easy little manner, that seemed quite delightful: but, notwithstanding all this, the people of the town of Lourdes began insensibly to get of a quarrelsome and a litigious turn, so that Jean Baptiste Arnault had his study in general pretty full of clients; and, though he made it appear clearly to the most common understanding, that his sole object was to promote peace and good-will; yet, strange to say, discord, the faithful jackal of all attornies, was a very constant attendant on his steps.

Such were the reports that had reached us at the Chateau de L'Orme; and the *maître d'hotel*, when he repeated them, laid his finger upon the side of his prominent and rubicund

proboscis, and screwed up his eye till it nearly suffered an eclipse, saying as plainly as nose and eye could say, "Monsieur Jean Baptiste Arnault is a cunning fellow." However, my father had no will to believe ill of any one and my mother as little; so that, when we set out for Lourdes, both were fully convinced that the parent of their child's deliverer was one of the most excellent of men.

After visiting the church, and offering at the shrine of *Notre Dame du bon secours*, we proceeded to the dwelling of the Procureur, and dismounting from our horses, entered the *étude* or office, of the lawyer; the boy, who had come to show us the way, throwing open the door with a consequential fling, calculated to impress the mind of the attorney with the honour which we did him. It was a miserable chamber, with a low table, and a few chairs, both strewn with some books of law and written papers, greased and browned by the continual thumbing of the coarse-handed peasants, in whose concerns they were written.

Jean Baptiste Arnault was not there, but

in his place appeared a person, plainly dressed in a suit of black, with buttons of jet, without any embroidery or ornament whatever. He wore a pair of riding-boots, with immense tops, shaped like a funnel, according to the mode of the day, and the dust upon these appendages, as well as the disordered state of his long wavy hair, seemed to announce that he had ridden far; while a large Sombrero hat, and a long steel-hilted Toledo sword, which lay beside him, led the mind naturally to conclude that his journey had been from Spain.

To judge of his station by his dress, one would have concluded him to be some Spanish merchant of no very large fortune; but his person and his air told a different tale. Pale, and even rather sallow in complexion, the high broad forehead, rising almost upright from his brow, and seen still higher through the floating curls of his dark hair, the straight, finely-turned nose, the small mouth curled with a sort of smile, strangely mingled of various expressions. half cynical, half bland, the full rounded chin, the very turn of his head and neck, as he sat

writing at a table exactly opposite the door, all gave that nobility to his aspect, which was not to be mistaken.

On our entrance, the stranger rose, and in answer to my mother's inquiry for the Procureur, replied, "Arnault is not at present here, but if the Countess de Bigorre will sit down, he shall attend her immediately," and taking up the letter he had been writing, he left the apartment.

The moment after, the door, by which he had gone out, again opened, and Jean Baptiste Arnault entered the room, at once verifying by his appearance every thing we had heard of his person. He was quite a dwarf in stature; and, in size at least, dame Nature had certainly very much favoured his head, at the expense of the rest of his body. His face, to my youthful eyes, appeared at least two feet square, with all the features in proportion, except the eyes, which were peculiarly small and black; and not being very regularly set in his head, seemed like two small boats, nearly lost in the vast ocean of countenance which lay before us.

I do not precisely remember the particulars of the conversation which took place upon his coming in, but I very well recollect laughing most amazingly at his appearance, in spite of my mother's reproof, and telling him, with the unceremonious candour of a spoiled child, that he was certainly the ugliest man I had ever seen. He affected to take my boldness in very good part, and called me a fine frank boy ; but there was a vindictive gleam in his little black eyes, which contradicted his words ; and I have since had reason to believe that he never forgot or forgave my childish rudeness. It is a very general rule, that a man is personally vain in proportion to his ugliness, and hates the truth in the same degree that he deceives himself. Certain it is, no man was ever more ugly, or ever more vain, and his conceit had not been nourished a little by marrying a very handsome woman.

Of course, the first subject of conversation, which arose between my mother and himself, was the service which his son had rendered me ; and, as a recompense, she offered that the

young Jean Baptiste should be received into the Chateau de L'Orme, and educated with its heir, which she considered as the highest honour that could be conferred on the young *roturier*; and in the second place, she promised in the name of my father, that five hundred livres per annum should be settled upon him for life, a sum of no small importance in those days, and in that part of the country.

The surprise and gratitude of the Attorney can hardly be properly expressed. Of liberality he had not in his own bosom one single idea; and, I verily believe, that at first, he thought my mother had some sinister object in the proposals which she made; but speedily recovering himself, he accepted with great readiness the pension that was offered to his son; at the same time hesitating a good deal in regard to sending him to the Chateau de L'Orme. He enlarged upon his sense of the honour, and the favour, and the condescension, but his son, he said, was the only person he had who could act as his clerk, and he was afraid he could not continue his business without him.

In short, his objections hurt my mother's pride, and she was rising with an air of dignity to put an end to the matter, by taking her departure, when, as if by a sudden thought, the Procureur besought her to stay one moment. And as her bounty had already been so great, perhaps she would extend it one degree farther. His son, he said, was absolutely necessary to him to carry on his business; but he had one daughter, whom, her mother being dead, he had no means of educating as he could wish. "If," said he, "Madame la Comtesse de Vigorre, will transfer the benefit she intended for my son to his sister, she will lay my whole family under an everlasting obligation; and I will take upon myself to affirm, that the disposition and talents of the child are such as will do justice to the kindness of her benefactress."

These words he pronounced in a loud voice, and then starting up, as if to cut across all deliberation on the subject, he said he would call both his children, and left the room.

After having been absent some time, he

returned with the lad who had saved my life, and a little girl of about ten years old. Jean Baptiste, the younger, was at this time about fifteen ; and though totally unlike his father in stature, in make, or in mind, he had still a sufficient touch of the old procureur in his countenance, to justify his mother in the matter of paternity.

Not so the little Helen, whose face was certainly not a reflexion of her father's, if such he was. Her long soft dark eyes alone, were sufficient to have overset the whole relationship, without even the glossy brown hair that curled round her brow, the high clear forehead, the mouth like twin cherries, or the brilliant complexion, which certainly put Monsieur Arnault's coffee-coloured skin very much out of countenance.

Her manners were as sweet and gentle as her person, my mother's heart was soon won, and the exchange proposed readily conceded.

The young Jean Baptiste was thanked both by my mother and myself, in all the terms we could find to express our gratitude, all which he

received in a good-humoured and yet a sheepish manner, as if he were at once gratified and distressed, by the commendations that were showered upon him. Helen, it was agreed should be brought over to the chateau the next day, and having now acquitted ourselves of the debt of obligation under which we had lain, we again mounted our horses and rode away from Lourdes.

CHAPTER III.

ALTHOUGH I hate to be my own historian, and string I, and I, and I, together to the end of the chapter, yet I nevertheless believe that no man's history can be so well told as by himself, if he will but be candid ; for no one can so completely enter into his feelings, or have so vivid an impression of the circumstances amidst which he has acted. Notwithstanding this, it shall be my endeavour to pass over the events of my youth as rapidly as possible, for the purpose of arriving at that part of this history where the stirring nature of the scenes in which I mingled may cover the egotism of the detail ; but still, as there are persons and occurrences

yet unmentioned, by which my after life was entirely modified, I must still pause a little on this part of my tale.

Faithful to the charge she had undertaken, my mother made the education of Helen Arnault her particular care. At first, she confined her instructions to those arts alone that were likely to be useful to her in the *bourgeoise* class in which she had been born, but there was a degree of ready genius mixed with the infinite gentleness of Helen's disposition, which gradually seduced my mother into teaching her much more than she had at first intended. Nor was she ill qualified for the task, possessing every female accomplishment, both mental and corporeal, in as much perfection as they had received in those days.* At first, the education of the sweet girl, thus placed under her protection, formed a sort of amusement for her, when my father and myself were absent in any of the long rides we used to take through the country—gradually it became so habitual as to be necessary to her comfort, and Helen so com-

pletely wound herself round the Countess's heart, that she could not bear to be without her for any considerable length of time.

Perhaps it was the very attachment which she herself experienced towards Helen, that made my mother feel how strong might be the effect of such sweetness and such beauty at some after time upon the heart of an ardent, sensitive, imaginative youth—and my mother from the first knew me to be such. Whatever was the cause, certain it is she took care that between Helen and myself should be placed a barrier of severe and chilling formality, calculated to repress the least intimacy in its very bud. Whenever she mentioned my name to her young *protégée*, it was always under the ceremonious epithet of Count Louis. Whenever I entered the room, Helen Arnault was sent away, upon some excuse which prevented her return; or if she was permitted to remain, there was a sort of courtly etiquette maintained, well calculated to freeze all the warmer blood of youth.

All this my mind has commented on since,

though I only regarded it, at the time, as something very disagreeable, without in the least understanding why my mother chose to play so very different a part from that which suited her natural character. She certainly acted for the best, but I think she was mistaken in her judgment of the means to be employed for effecting her object. It is probable, that had she suffered me at the first to look upon Helen Arnault as a sister, and taught her to consider me as her brother, the feelings which we acquired towards each other at ten and twelve years old, would have remained unchanged at a later period. God knows how it would have been ! I am afraid that all experiments upon young hearts are dangerous things. The only remedy is, I believe, a stone wall, and the example of Pyramus and Thisbe demonstrates that even it must not have a crack in it.

As it was, the years rolled on, and I began to acquire the sensations of manhood. I saw Helen Arnault but by glimpses, but I saw nothing on earth so lovely. Every day new beau-

ties broke forth upon me, and it was impossible to behold her hour by hour, expanding into the perfection of womanhood, without experiencing those feelings with which we see a bud open out into the rose — a wish to possess so beautiful a thing.

In the meanwhile, several changes took place in our vicinity ; the most important of which was the arrival of a neighbour. The Chateau de L'Orme stood, as I have said, upon the side of the hill, commanding an extensive view through the valley below. It had originally been nothing more than one of those towers to be found in every gorge of the Pyrenees, built in times long past to defend the country from the incursions of the Moors of Spain.

After the expulsion of the infidels from the Peninsula, it had been converted into a hunting residence for the Counts of Bigorre, and a great many additions made to it, according to the various tastes of a long line of proprietors, who had each in general followed the particular style of architecture which accorded with his own immediate pursuits. The more warlike

had built towers, and walls, and turrets, and battlements. One of the Counts dying without children, it had fallen into the hands of his brother, who was a bishop. He added a gothic chapel and a dormitory for ecclesiastics. His nephew, a famous lawyer and President de Grenoble, no sooner succeeded, than he built an immense hall, exactly copied from the hall of justice in which he had so often presided ; and others of different dispositions had equally taken care of the stables, the dairy, and the kitchen.

In short, they had been like the fairies called to the birth of a child in our nursery tales ; each had endowed the building with some particular gift, so that on the whole, though somewhat straggling and irregular, it contained an apartment of every kind, sort, and description, that could be wanted or wished for.

In one of the square towers, built upon the edge of a steep rock, some ninety feet in height, my father had fixed his library. Here he could read whatever book he chose, in a quiet, dozy sort of manner, without hearing any noise from

the rest of the house; though at the same time, he just caught, through the open windows, the murmuring of the waterfall below, and could look up from what he was perusing, and run his eye through all the windings of the valley, with a dreamy contemplative listlessness, in which he was very fond to indulge.

At about a quarter of a mile from the chateau, and amongst the first objects within the scope of my father's view as he sat in this library, was a small house, which had belonged to some of the wealthier retainers of the family, when it had been in its flush prosperity. This had since passed into the hands of a farmer, at the time that my grandfather had judged proper to diminish the family estate, and expend its current representative in gunpowder and cannon balls; but a year or two before the time to which I refer, it had become vacant by the death of its occupier, and had remained shut up ever since.

Little care being taken to keep this house in repair, it formed a sort of eye-sore in my father's view, and regularly every month he declared he

would repurchase it, and arrange it according to his own taste, with a degree of energy and even vehemence of manner, which would have led any one, who did not know him, to suppose that within an hour the purchase would be completed, and the alterations put in train ; but the moment he had shut the library door behind him, he began to think of something else, and before he was in the court-yard he had forgot all about it.

One morning, however, he was not a little surprised to see the windows of the house opened, and two or three workmen of various kinds employed in rendering it habitable. Without giving himself time to recover from his astonishment, or to forget the change, he sent down the lackey to inquire the name of its new occupier, and, in short, the whole particulars.

How the man executed his commission I know not, but the reply was, that the Chevalier de Montenero would do himself the honour of waiting upon the Count de Bigorre. My father said, "Very well," and resolved to have

every thing prepared to receive this new neighbour with ceremony ; but finding that the arrangements required a good deal of thought, he resolved to leave them all to my mother, and was proceeding to her apartments for the purpose of casting the weight of it upon her shoulders, when, in the corridor, he met little Helen Arnault, who had then been with us about six months — began playing with and caressing her — forgot the Chevalier de Montenero, and went out to ride with me towards Bigorre.

On our return, we found a strong iron-grey horse saddled in the court-yard, and were informed that the Chevalier de Montenero was in the apartments of Madame la Comtesse. On following my father thither, I instantly recognised the person we had seen in the *étude* of the Procureur at Lourdes. The sight, I will own, was a pleasing one to me, for from the moment I had first beheld him I had wished to hear and see more. There was a sort of dignity in his aspect that struck my boyish imagination, and captivated me in a way I cannot account for. I am well aware that on every

principle of right reasoning, the theory of innate sympathies is one of the most ridiculous that ever the theory-mongers of this earth produced, but yet, though strange, it is no less a fact, which every one must have felt, that there are persons whom we meet in the world, and who, without one personal beauty to attract, and, even before we have had any opportunity of judging of their minds, obtain a sort of hold upon our feelings and imagination, more powerful than long acquaintance, with their qualities of mind could produce. Perhaps it is by some association between their persons and our preconceived ideas of goodness.

The Chevalier de Montenero, however, in his youth must have been remarkable for personal beauty, and the strongest traces of it remained even yet, though, in this respect, years had been the less merciful, inasmuch as they had been leagued with care. Deep lines of painful and anxious thought were evident on the Chevalier's forehead and in his cheek—but it was not thought of a mean or sordid nature. The grandeur of his brow, the erect unshrinking

dignity of his carriage, all contradicted it. Powerful, or rather overpowering passions, might perchance speak forth in the flash of his dark eye, but its expression for good or bad, was still great and elevated. There was something also that might be called impenetrable in his air. It was that of a man long accustomed to bury matters of much import deep in his own bosom ; and very few, I believe, would have liked to ask him an impertinent question.

In manner he was mild and grave ; and though his name was evidently Spanish, and his whole dress and appearance betrayed that he had very lately arrived from that country, yet he spoke our language with perfect facility, and without the slightest foreign accent. I believe the pleasure I felt in seeing him again, showed itself in somewhat of youthful gladness, and as he was not a man to despise any thing that was pure and unaffected, he seemed gratified by my remembrance, and invited me to visit him in his solitude. “ I mean, Madame,” said he, turning to my mother, “ to make the house which I have bought in the valley a

hermitage, in almost every thing but the name ; but if you will occasionally permit your son to cheer it with his company, I shall be the happier in the society of one who as yet is certainly uncorrupted by this bad world, and, in return, he may perhaps learn from me some of that lore which long commerce with my fellow-creatures, and much familiarity with great and strange events, have taught me."

I eagerly seized on the permission, and from that day, whenever my mood turned towards the serious and the thoughtful, my steps naturally followed the path towards the dwelling of the Chevalier. I may say that I won his affection, and much did he strive to correct and guide my disposition to high and noble objects, marking keenly every propensity in my nature, and endeavouring to direct them aright.

There was a charm in his conversation, an impressive truth in all he said, that both persuaded and convinced ; and, had I followed the lessons of wisdom I heard from his lips, I should have been both happier and better in my after life ; but the struggle of youthful passion

was ever too strong for reason, and for many years of my being I was but a creature of impulse, carried away by the wish of the moment, and forgetting, at the time I most needed them, all the resolutions I had founded upon the experience of others.

The Chevalier evidently saw and regretted the wildness of my disposition, but I do not think he loved me the less. There was something in it that harmonized with his own character ; for often, notwithstanding all that he had learned in the impressive school of the world, the original enthusiasm of his heart would shine out, in spite of the veil of stern coldness with which he covered his warmer feelings. This I remarked afterwards ; but suffice it in this place to say, that his regard for me assumed a character of almost paternal tenderness, which I ever repaid by a respect and reverence I am afraid more than filial. In his manners, to every one but the members of our family, he was distant and cold, but it seemed as if towards us his heart had expanded from the first. My mother he would often visit,

behaving on such occasions with the calm, elegant attention of high bred courtesy, never stiffening into coldness or sinking into familiarity. With my father he would sit for many hours at a time, conversing over various subjects of life and morals, with which, even to my young mind, it was apparent that he was actively and practically acquainted; while my father, though perhaps his reasoning was as good, spoke evidently but from what he had read and what he had heard, without the clear precision of personal knowledge.

Other acquaintances, also, though of an inferior class, and very different character, must now be mentioned, though neither their habits of life, or rank in society, were calculated to throw much lustre on those who in any way consorted with them.

The excessive height to which the Gabelle had carried the price of salt, acted as one of the greatest encouragements to those Spanish smugglers, who have in all times frequented the various passes of the Pyrenees, and distinguished themselves by a daring and reckless

courage, and a keen penetrating sagacity, which might have raised them individually to the highest stations of society, if employed for the nobler and better purposes of existence.

It unfortunately happens in the world, that talent is less frequently wanting than the wisdom to employ it; and many men, who, to my knowledge, might have established their own fortune, served their country, and rendered their name immortal, have wasted grand abilities upon petty schemes, and heroic courage upon disgraceful enterprises. So was it, though in a minor degree, with many of the Spanish smugglers that were continually passing to and fro in our immediate neighbourhood; and a braver or more ingenious race of men never existed.

Of course they were not without their aiders and abettors on the French side of the mountains; and it was very generally supposed that the mill, near which I had fallen into the water, was a great receptacle for the contraband goods which they imported. However, nothing of the kind was to be discovered, although the officers of the Gabelle, called Gabel-

lateurs, and the Douaniers, or custom-house officers, had visited it at all times and seasons. The mill had ever been found clear and fair, and the miller, a quiet, civil sort of person, who let them look where they listed, and took it all in good part.

Notwithstanding all this fair appearance, which baffled even the keen eyes of those interested in the discovery, and deceived completely all who were not interested in the smuggling itself, whenever my father wanted some good Alicante wine, or Xeres, or any thing else of the same nature, he sent to the miller, who was always found ready to oblige *Monseigneur le Comte*. Often also, in my childhood, did I visit the mill in company with the old *maître d'hotel*, whose predilection for the good things of this life, especially in the form of liquids, would have led him to cultivate the acquaintance of the Devil himself, if he had appeared with a bottle of wine under his arm. Many was the curious scene that I thus saw, now floating faintly before my memory as a remembered dream; and many were

the means employed to make the amiable practice of smuggling palatable to the taste of the heir of Bigorre. Oranges, and pomegranates, and dates, were always brought forward to gratify the young Count, and my bold and daring spirit, even as a child, excited the admiration and delight of many of the dark smugglers, who used, in return, to tell me long stories of their strange adventures, which, heightened by the barbarous yet picturesque dialect that they spoke, excited my fancy to the utmost, and sent me away with my brain full of wild imaginations.

Very often, if any of these men had something peculiarly rare or curious to dispose of, they went so far as to bring it up to the Chateau de l'Orme, where my father generally became a purchaser, notwithstanding a remonstrance which my mother would occasionally venture to make against the encouragement of persons habitually infringing the law of the land.

Our family thus acquired the reputation amongst the smugglers of being their patrons

and benefactors; and violent in all their passions, whether good or bad, their gratitude was enthusiastic in proportion. One of them, named Pedro Garcias, deserves more particular notice than the rest on many accounts. When I first knew him, he was a man of about forty, perhaps more; but time and danger, and excited passion and fatigue, had made as little impression upon him as the soft waves of some sheltered bay do upon the granite rocks that surround it. He was born at the little village of Hacca, on the other side of the mountains, the son of a wealthy farmer, who afforded him an education much superior to his rank in life. The blood of his ancestors, they said, was mingled with that of the Moors, and instead of feeling this circumstance as a stain upon his race, like most of his countrymen, he seemed rather to glory in his descent from a valiant and conquering people, and to exult in the African fire that circled in his veins.

His complexion, however, was not peculiarly swarthy, though his long stiff black hair, and flashing eyes, spoke out in favour of his

Moorish origin. In height he was nearly six feet three inches; but instead of any of the awkward disproportion which we sometimes see in tall people, his form was cast in the most exquisite mould of vigorous masculine beauty.

There existed between his mind and person that similarity which we more frequently find amongst the uncultivated children of Nature, than where education has changed the character, or impeded its development. His intellect and all his perceptions were strong, powerful, and active, with a certain cast of fearless grandeur about them, that gave something of great and fine even to the employment he had chosen. His disposition also was quick, hasty, and unsparing, but full of a rude enthusiastic generosity, that would have taught him to die for those he considered his friends, and also a bold dignity, which led him to trust to daring more than cunning. He had in his nature much of the beast of prey, but it was of the nobler kind.

Heaven knows how, with so many qualities of mind and person — qualities calculated to

raise him above, rather than sink him below the station in which he was born — Heaven knows how he fell into the perilous but inglorious life of a simple *contrabandisto* between France and Spain.

This man was one of the smugglers who most frequently visited the chateau, and it sometimes happened that the intermediation of the old *maître d'hotel* was dispensed with, and that he would be admitted to an audience of my father himself, which generally lasted a considerable time; for Garcias possessed that sort of natural eloquence which, mingled with a degree of caustic humour, was sure to command attention, and to engage without wearying. There was something too in his very appearance that attracted and interested. Certainly never was a more picturesque, I may say, a more striking figure seen, than he presented, as I have beheld him, often, coming down amongst the mountains, whose child he seemed to be; his long black hair gathered into a net under his broad sombrero; his cloak of chequered cloth, mantling all the upper part of his figure, and only leav-

ing free the left hip, with the steel hilt of his sword, and the right arm ready to make use of it ; while his legs, whose swelling muscles told of their gigantic strength, appeared striding underneath, covered to the knees with the tight elastic silk breeches of the Aragonese mountaineers. The rest of his dress generally consisted of a brown cloth jacket, a crimson sash round his waist, containing his pistols and long knife, white stockings, and a pair of mountain sandals, made of untanned cowhide, laced up to his ankle.

Such were the various persons that surrounded me in my youth ; and such indeed were the only ones with whom I had any communication, except the young Jean Baptiste Arnault, who used to come frequently to see his sister. Her father troubled himself very little about her, after she was once fairly under the protection of my mother ; but her brother was not so remiss, and, whenever he came, was received with kindness by all the family, nor suffered to depart without some little token of regard. For my own part, the memory of the service

he had rendered me remained ever upon my mind, and showed itself in every way that my youthful imagination could devise; till, at length, the good simple-hearted lad, from the person obliging, began to feel himself the obliged, and both feelings mingling in his heart together, produced towards me the most generous and disinterested attachment.

I have said that I was between twelve and thirteen years old when Helen Arnault first became an inmate of the same dwelling. Two years rapidly passed by, and not long after I had reached the age of fourteen, I was sent to the college of Pau, where three years and a half more glided away in imperturbed tranquillity — calm — quiet — slow; but what a change had taken place in all my thoughts and feelings by the time they had passed! I was farther advanced both in stature, in form, and ideas, than most youths of my age. Childhood was gone — manhood was at hand. I had left the placid, innocent bowers of infancy, with their cool and passionless shades; and I stood with my footstep on the threshold of man's

busy and tumultuous theatre, ready to plunge into the arena and struggle with the rest. My heart full of strong and ardent passions, my *imagination vivid and uncontrolled*, with some knowledge gained from books, and some shrewd sense of my own, but with little self-government, and no experience, I set out from Pau, to return to my paternal mansion ; and as from that day I may date the commencement of a new existence, I will pause, and begin my manhood with a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER IV.

I WAS now eighteen ; slim, tall, and vigorous, inheriting some portion both of my father's and of my mother's personal beauty, and superadding all those graces which are peculiarly the property of youth ; the flowers which partial Nature bestows upon the spring of life, and which are rarely compensated by the fruits of manhood's summer. I know not why I should refrain from saying I was handsome. Long before any one reads these lines, that which was so, will be dust and ashes,—a thing, that creatures composed of the same sordid materials, cemented by the same fragile medium of life, will turn from with insect disgust. With this consciousness before me, I will venture, then, to

say, that I *was* handsome—If ever I was personally vain, such a folly is amongst those that have left me.

However, with some good looks, and some knowledge that I did possess them, it is not very wonderful that I should try to set them off to the best advantage, on my return home after a long absence. There might be a little native puppyism in the business; there might be, also, some thought of looking well in the eyes of Helen Arnault, for even at that early age, I had begun to think about her a great deal more than was necessary; and to pamper my imagination with a thousand fine romances which need the lustrous air, the glowing skies, the magnificent scenes, of the romance breathing Pyrenees, to make them at all comprehensible. Certain it is, that I did think of Helen Arnault very often; but never was her idea more strongly in my mind than on that morning when I was awakened for the purpose of bidding adieu to my college studies, and of returning once more to my home, and my parents, and the scenes of my infancy. I am

afraid, that amongst all the expectations which crowded upon my imagination, the thought of Helen Arnault was most prominent.

At five o'clock precisely, old Houssaye, who had been trumpeter to my grandfather's regiment of royalists in the wars of the League, and was now promoted to the high and dignified station of my valet de chambre and gouverneur, stood at my bed-side, and told me that our horses were saddled, our baggage packed up, and that I had nothing to do but to dress myself, mount, and set out. He was somewhat astonished, I believe, at seeing me lie, for some ten minutes after he had drawn the curtains, in the midst of meditation, which to him seemed very simple meditations indeed, but which were, in fact, so complicated of thoughts, and feelings, and hopes, and wishes, and remembrances, that I defy any mortal being to have disentangled the Gordian knot into which I had twisted them. After trying some time in vain, I took the method of that great Macedonian baby, who found the world too small a plaything, and by jumping up, I cut the knot with

all its involutions asunder. But my farther proceedings greatly increased good master Houssaye's astonishment, for instead of contenting myself with my student's dress of simple black, with a low collar devoid of lace, which he judged would suit a dusty road better than any *other suit I had*, I insisted on his again opening the valise, and taking out my very best slashed pourpoint, my lace collar, my white buskins, and my gilt spurs. Then, having dressed myself *en cavalier parfait*, drawn the long curls of my dark hair over my forehead, and tossed on my feathered hat, instead of the prim-looking conceit with which I had covered my head at college, I rushed down the interminable staircase into the court-yard, with a sudden burst of youthful extravagance; and, springing on my horse, left poor Houssaye to follow as he best might.

Away I went out of Pau, like a young colt when first freed from the restraint of the stable, and turned out to grass in the joy-inspiring fields. Over hill and dale, and rough and smooth, I spurred on, with very little regard to

my horse's wind, till I came to the rising ground which presents itself just before crossing the river to reach Estelle. The first object on the height is the Chateau of Coarasse, in which Henry IV. passed the earlier years of his youth, and wherein he received that education which gave to the world one of the most noble and generous-hearted of its kings. I had seen it often before, and I know not what chain of association established itself between my own feelings at the time, and the memories that hovered round its old grey walls, but I drew in my horse's bridle on the verge, and gazed upon the building before me, as if interrogating it of greatness, and of fame, and of the world's applause. There was, however, a chill and a sternness about all that it replied, which fell coldly upon the warm wishes of youth. It spoke of glory, indeed, and of honour, and the immortality of a mighty name: but it spoke also, of the dead—of those who could not hear, who could not enjoy the cheerless recompense of posthumous renown. It told, too, of Fortune's fickleness—of a world's

ingratitude—of the vanity of greatness—and the emptiness of hope.

With a tightened bridle, and slow pace, I pursued my way to Estelle, and dismounting in the yard of the post-house, I desired the saddle to be taken off my horse, which was wearied with my inconsiderate galloping up and down hill, and to be then placed on the best beast which was disengaged in the stable.

While this was in execution, I walked into the kitchen with some degree of sulkiness of mood, at not being able to squeeze some brighter encouragement from a place so full of great memories as the Chateau of Henry Quatre, and laying my hat on the table, I amused myself for some time, with twisting the straws upon the floor into various shapes, with the point of my sword; and then returned to the court to see if I had been obeyed. The saddle, it is true, had been placed upon the fresh horse, but just as this was finished, a gentleman rode into the yard with four or five servants—smooth-faced, pink-and-white lackeys—with that look of swaggering tiptoe insolence

which bespeaks in general, either a weak or an uncourteous lord. Seeing my saddle on a horse that suited his whim, the stranger, without ceremony, ordered the hostler to take it off instantly, and prepare the beast for his use.

He was a tall, elegant man, of about forty, with an air of most insufferable pride; which—though ever but tinsel quality at the best—shone like gold in the master, when compared with the genuine brass of his servants, who, while their Lord dismounted, treated the hostler with the sweet and delectable epithets of, villain, hog, slave, and ass, for simply setting forth, that the horse was pre-engaged.

There have been many moments in my life, when either laziness, or good-humour, or carelessness, would have prevented me from opposing this sort of infraction of my prior right; but, on the present occasion, I was not in a humour to yield one step to any body. Without seeking my hat, therefore, I walked up to the Cavalier, who still stood in the court, and informed him that the saddle must not be removed, for that I had engaged the horse. Without

turning round, he looked at me for a moment over his shoulder, and seeing a face fringed by no martial beard, yet insolent enough to contradict his will, he bestowed a buffet upon it with the back of his hand, which deluged my fine lace collar in blood from my nose.

The soul of Laure de Bigorre, my ancestress, who contended for her birthright with a king, rose in my bosom at the affront, and drawing my sword, without a moment's hesitation, I lunged straight at his heart. The dazzling of my eyes from the blow he had given me, just gave him time to draw and parry my thrust, or that instant he had lain a dead man at my feet. The scorn with which he treated me at first, now turned to rage at the boldness of my attack, and the moment' he had parried, he pressed me hard in return, thinking, doubtless, soon to master the sword of an inexperienced boy. A severe wound in his sword-arm, was the first thing that showed him his mistake, and in an instant after, in making a furious lunge, his foot slipped, and he fell ; his weapon at the same time flying out of his hand in ano-

ther direction, while his thunder-struck lackeys stood gaping with open mouths and bloodless checks, turned into statues by a magical mixture of fright and astonishment.

I am ashamed to say, that anger over-powered my better-feelings, and I was about to wash out the indignity he had offered me in his blood, when I heard some one opposite exclaim, "Ha!" in an accent both of surprise and reproach. I looked up, and immediately my eyes encountered those of Chevalier de Montenero, standing in the yard, with his arms crossed upon his bosom, regarding us intently.

I understood the meaning of his exclamation at once, and dropping the point of my weapon, I turned to my adversary, saying, "Rise, Sir, and take up your sword."

He rose slowly and sullenly, and while his servants pressed round to aid him, returned his blade into its scabbard, bending his brows upon me with a very sinister frown—"We shall meet again, young Sir," said he with a meaning nod; "we shall meet again where I

may have better space to chastise your insolence."

"I dare say we shall meet again," answered I, "what may come then God knows;" and I turned upon my heel towards the Chevalier, who embraced me affectionately, whispering at the same time, "Wash the blood from your face and mount as quickly as you can; your adversary is not a man who may be offended with impunity."

I did as he bade me, and we rode out of the court together, taking our way onward towards Lourdes. As we went, the Chevalier threw back his hat from his face, and with one of those beaming smiles that sometimes lighted up his whole countenance, bestowed the highest praises on my conduct.

"Believe me, my dear Count Louis," said he, "such is the way to pass tranquilly through life; for with courage, and skill, and moderation, such as you have shown to-day, bad men will be afraid to be your enemies, and good men will be proud to be your friends." He then informed me that my opponent was the famous

Marquis de Saint Brie, who had been strongly suspected in two instances of having used somewhat foul means to rid himself of a successful rival. "He prevailed on the Chevalier de Valençais to sup with him," proceeded the Chevalier. "The supper was good, the wine excellent, the Marquis fascinating; and poor De Valençais returned home, believing that he had lost an enemy and gained a friend. Ere he had been half an hour in bed, he called his valet in great agony, and before morning he had lost all his enemies together, and gone to join his friends in Heaven. The physician shook his head, but after having had an hour's conversation with the Marquis, he became quite convinced that the poor youth had died of an inflammation.

"The other is not so distinct a tale," continued the Chevalier, "or I have not heard it so completely, but from this man's general character, I have no doubt of his criminality. He some years ago proposed to marry the beautiful Henriette de Vergne, and offered himself to her father. The old man examined his

rents, and finding that he had three hundred thousand livres per annum, he felt instantly convinced the Marquis de St. Brie was the most noble-minded, honourable, sweet-tempered, and amiable man in the world; and possessed all these qualities in exactly the proportion of three to one more than the Count de Bagnols, to whom he had before promised his daughter, and who had but one hundred thousand livres per annum. His calculation was soon made, and sending for the young Count, he informed him that he was not near so good a man as the Marquis de St. Brie, and gave him his reasons for thinking so; at the same time breaking formally his former engagement. De Bagnols instantly sent his cartel to the Marquis de St. Brie, who accepted it, but named a distant day. Before that day arrived, the young Count was accused of aiding the Huguenots at Rochelle, and was arrested; but he contrived to escape and transfer great part of his property to Spain. Now comes the more obscure part of the tale. The marriage of the Marquis with Mademoiselle de Vergne approached, and

great preparations were made at her father's chateau, but a man was seen lurking about the park, whom many of the servants recognised as the Count de Bagnols. They were wise, however, and said nothing, though it was generally rumoured amongst them that the Count had been privately married to their young lady some weeks before his arrest. The night, however, on which Monsieur de St. Brie arrived, and which was to precede his marriage by one week, an uneasy conscience having rendered him restless, he by chance beheld a man descend from the window of Mademoiselle de Vergne's apartment. He gave the alarm, and with much fury declared he had been cheated, deceived, betrayed, and it then appeared, they say, that the fair Henriette had really married her lover. He was now, however, an exile, and a wanderer; and her father declared he would have the marriage annulled, if the Marquis de St. Brie would but do him the honour to stay and wed his daughter. The Marquis, however, sternly refused, and that very night departed and took up his lodging at the village

hard by. The Count de Bagnols was never heard of more. Two mornings afterwards, there was found in the park of M. de Vergne, a broken sword, near the spot where it was supposed the lover used to leap the wall. The ground round about was dented with the struggling of many feet, died and dabbled with gore. Part of a torn cloak too was found, and a long train of bloody drops from that place to the bank of the river; a peasant also deposed to having seen two men fling a heavy burden into the stream at that spot—he would not swear that it was a dead body, but he thought it was.”

“And what became of Mademoiselle de la Vergne?” demanded I.

“The Countess de Bagnols,” said the Chevalier, “for no doubt remained of her marriage, removed, or was removed, I know not precisely which, to a convent, where she died about five or six months afterwards.”

The Chevalier ceased, and we both fell into a deep silence. The fate of the two lovers, whose story he had just told, was one well cal-

culated to excite many of those feelings in my young heart, which, when really strong, do not evaporate in words. I could have wept for the fate of the two lovers, and my heart burned like fire to think that such base wrongs should exist—and exist unpunished. All the sympathy I felt for them, easily changed into indignation towards him whom I looked upon as the cause of the death of both ; and I regretted that I had not passed my sword through the heart of their murderer when he lay prostrate on the ground before me.

“ Had I known,” cried I, at length—“ Had I known but half an hour ago, who was the man, and what were his actions, yon black-hearted assassin should have gone to another world to answer for the crimes he has committed in this.”

“ You did wisely to refrain,” replied the Chevalier, with a tone of calmness that to my unrepressed heat smacked of apathetic frigidity : “ Viewed by an honourable mind, my dear Louis, his very fall covered him with a shield more impenetrable than the sevenfold buckler

of Tclamon. Never regret an act of generosity, however worthless the object. If you act nobly to one that deserves nobly, you confer a benefit on him and a benefit on yourself: if he be undeserving, still the very action does good to your own heart. In the present instance, had you slain that bad man, you would probably have entailed ruin on yourself for ever. Allied as he is to all the most powerful of the land, the direst vengeance would infallibly follow his fall, from whatever hand it came, and instant flight or certain death must have been your choice. Even as it is, you have called upon yourself the hatred of a man who was never known to forgive. When the first heat of his rage is past, he may seem to forget the affront he has received, but still it will be remembered and treasured up till occasion serves for wiping it out in the most remorseless manner. At present, I would certainly advise your father to take advantage of the temporary peace that exists with Spain, and send you into that land, till the man you have offended has quitted this part of the country, and it is pos-

sible you may never meet with him again. If you do, however, beware, for his anger, believe me, is as imperishable as the fabled wrath of Juno. I am going to Saragossa myself upon business of importance, and will willingly take all charge of you, if you will join me there. Tell the Count what has happened--tell him what I say, and bid him lose no time—I would urge it upon him personally, but the affairs that call me into Spain admit of no delay.”

CHAPTER V.

As the Chevalier concluded, he put his horse into a quicker pace, and in a minute or two after, the road opened out into the beautiful valley of Lourdes.

It would be difficult to express the thrilling feelings of exquisite delight with which I beheld again the scenes of my early remembrances. One must be a mountaineer to feel that strange attachment to one particular spot of earth which makes all the rest of the world but a desert to the heart. I have read a thousand theories, by a thousand philosophers, intended to show the latent causes of such sensations, and on comparing them with the living feelings of my own breast, I have found them what I be-

lieve the theories of philosophers generally are, chains of reasoning as fragile and unsubstantial as those links which the children in the country weave out of flowers, graceful in formation and, apparently, firmly united, but which the slightest touch will snap asunder. Such feelings are too fine, too subtle for the grasp of reason; they cannot be analysed; they cannot be described; and even while we experience them, we can render to ourselves no account of why they are felt. The first sight of the Castle of Lourdes, perched upon its high rock, with its battlements and turrets, and watch-towers; while the mountains sweeping round it formed a glorious purple background to its bold features, and the sparkling stream seemed playing at its feet—the very first sight made my heart beat like a young lover's when he sees again after a long absence the first inspirer of his airy dreams.

Each blue hill, each winding path, each detached rock, each ancient tree, that my eye rested upon, was a landmark to guide the wanderer, memory, back through the waste of

years, to some joy, or some sport, or some pleasure, long left behind. Eagerly I followed the Chevalier on, from one object to another, gleaning bright remembrances as I went along, while the rapid mind, with every footfall of my horse, still ran through a thousand associations, and came back like light to mark some new theme of memory. Even the dirty, little, insignificant town of Lourdes, had greater charms, in my eyes, than a city of palaces would, at that moment, have possessed, and I looked upon all the faces that I saw as if I recognized them for my kinsfolk.

When we arrived at the market-place, the Chevalier, who was about to visit the house of Arnault, his procurcur, left me, and I proceeded alone, riding rapidly on till the path, winding through the narrow gorge beyond Lourdes, opened out into the wide basin of Argelès. I paused for a moment to look over its far extent, rich in sunny magnificence. All seemed brightness, and tranquillity, and summer ; every asperity was smoothed and harmonized, and the lustrous purple of the distant air, spread a

misty softness over each rough feature of the mountains; while a thousand blue and indistinct passes wound away on every side, promising to lead to calm and splendid lands beyond. It was like the prospect of life to a young and ardent imagination, before years have clouded the scene, or experience has exposed its ruggedness. There, was the dazzling misty sunshine with which fancy invests every distant object — there, the sweet valleys of repose where we promise ourselves peace and enjoyment—there, the mighty steps whereby ambition would mount unto the sky; while the dim passes that branched away on either hand, imaged not ill the thousand vague and dreamy schemes of youth for reaching fancied delights which shall never be attained.

There were, however, real and substantial joys before me, which I hurried on to taste; and in the expectation of which, was mingled no probable alloy, although I had been so long absent from my native home. The meeting of long separated friends is rarely indeed without its pain. To mark the ravages that

Time's deliberate, remorseless hand has worked upon those we love—to see a grace fled—or a happiness—any, any change in what is dear, is something to regret. But I was not at a time of life to anticipate sorrow; and my parents had seen me at Pau some four months before, so that but little alteration could have taken place.

Nothing, therefore, waited me but delight. My horse flew rather than ran, and the dwelling of my sires was soon within sight. I sprang to the ground in the court yard, and, without a moment's pause, ran up the stairs to my mother's apartments, not hearing or attending to the old *maître d'hôtel*, who reiterated that she was in the garden.

There was delight in treading each old accustomed step of my infancy, of gazing round upon objects, every line of which was a memory. The gloom of the old vestibule, the channeled marble of the grand staircase, the immense oaken door of my mother's apartments, all called up remembrances of the sweet past; and I hurried on, gathering recollections, till I entered the

embroidery-room, where I had sprung a thousand times to her arms in my early boyhood.

The only person that I found there was Helen. She had risen on hearing my step, and what was passing in her mind I know not, but the blood rushed up through her beautiful clear skin till it covered her whole forehead and her temples with a hue like the rose ; and I could see her lip quiver, and her knees shake, as she waited to receive my first salutation. I was carried on by the joyful impetus of my return, or, perhaps, I might have been as embarrassed as herself ; but springing forward towards her, without giving myself time to become agitated, I kissed the one fair cheek she turned towards me, and was going on in the usual form to have kissed the other, but in travelling round, my lips passed hers, and they were so round, so full, so sweet, for my life I could not get any farther, and I stopped my journey there.

Helen started back, and gazing at me with a look of deep surprise and even mortification, sunk into the chair from which she had risen

at my coming ; while I, with a brain reeling with strange and new feelings, and a heart palpitating with I knew not what, hurried away to seek my mother ; unable even to find one word of excuse for what I had done, and feeling it wrong, very wrong, but finding it impossible to wish it undone.

The garden consisted of about an acre of ground, disposed in a long parallelogram, and forced into a level much against the will of the mountain, which invaded its rectilinear figure with several unmathematical rocks. Luckily my mother was at the extreme end, leaning on the arm of my father, who with an affection that the chilly touch of Time had found no power to cool, was supporting her in her walk with as much attentive kindness as he had shown to his bride upon his wedding day.

I had thus time to get rid of a certain sort of whirl in my brain, which the impress of Helen's lips had left, and to turn the current of my thoughts back to those parents, for whom in truth I entertained the deepest affection.

My mother, I found, had been ill, and was so still, though in some degree better; so that my sorrow to see her so much enfeebled as she appeared to be, together with many other feelings, drove my adventure of the morning, the Marquis de St. Brie, and the advice of the Chevalier, entirely out of my thoughts, till poor Houssaye, whom I had left at Pau, arrived, bringing a sadly mangled and magnified account of my rencontre, gathered from hostlers and postilions at Estelle.

As his history of my exploits went to give me credit for the death of five or six giants and anthropophagi, I thought it necessary to interrupt him, and told my own tale myself. The different effects that it produced upon a brave man and a timid woman may well be conceived. My father said I had acted right in every thing, and my mother nearly fainted. Perceiving her agitation, I thought it better to delay the message of the Chevalier till dinner, when I judged that her mind would be in some degree calmed, for she wept over the first essay of my sword, as if it had been a misfortune.

My father and myself conducted the Countess to her apartments, where Helen still sat, hardly recovered from the agitation into which I had thrown her. On seeing me again, she cast down her look, and the tell-tale blood rushed up into her cheek so quickly, that had not my mother's eyes been otherwise engaged in weeping, she must have remarked her sudden change of colour. Observing the Countess's tears, Helen glided forward, and cast her arms round the neck of her patroness, saying that she hoped that nothing had occurred to give her alarm or discomfort.

“Both, Helen!” replied my mother; “both!” and then proceeded to detail the whole story, foreboding danger and sorrow, from my early initiation into strife and bloodshed. Yet, although not knowing it, my mother, I am sure, did not escape without feeling some small share of maternal pride at her son's first achievement. I saw it in her face, I heard it in her tone; and often since I have had occasion to remark, how like the passions, the feelings, and the prejudices, which swarm in our bosoms, are to a

large mixed society, wherein the news that is painful to one is pleasing to another, and joy and sorrow are the results of the same cause, at the same moment. Man's heart is a microcosm, the actors in which are the passions, as varied as opposed, as shaded one into the other, as we see the characters of men, in the great scene of the world.

As my mother spoke, Helen's lovely face grew paler and paler, and I could see her full snowy bosom, which was just panting into womanhood, heave as with some strong internal emotion, till at length she suddenly fell back, apparently lifeless.

It was long ere we could bring her back to sensation; but when she was fully recovered, she attributed her illness to having remained the whole day stooping over a miniature picture, which she was drawing of my mother; and the Countess, whose love for her had by this time become nearly maternal, exacted a promise from her that she would take a mountain walk every morning before she began her task.

This may seem a trifle; but I have learned by many a rude rebuff to know, that there is no such thing as a trifle in this world. All is of consequence—all may be of import. Helen's mountain walks sealed my fate. At dinner I delivered the message and advice, with which the Chevalier had charged me, and, after some discussion, it was determined that it should be followed. My father at first opposed it, and indignantly spurned at the idea of any one attempting injury to the heir of Bigorre in his paternal dwelling; but my mother's anxiety prevailed, backed by the advice and persuasions of good Father Francis of Allurdi, who offered to accompany me for the short time that my absence might be necessary. My father soon grew weary of making any opposition; and it was agreed that myself, Father Francis, and Houssaye, my valet, should take our departure for Spain within two days, and, joining the Chevalier at Saragossa, should remain there till we received information that the Marquis de St. Brie had quitted Bearn.

That day ended, and another began, and,

springing from my bed with the vigorous freshness that dwellers in cities never know, I took my gun, and proceeded to the mountain, purposing to search the rocks for an izzard. Gradually, however, I became thoughtful; and, revolving the events of the previous day, many a varied feeling rose in my mind, and I found that that one stirring and active day had changed me more than years of what had passed before — that it was, in fact, my first day of manhood. I had staked and won in the perilous game of mortal strife. I had shed blood — I had passed the rubicon — I was a man. Onward! onward! onward! was the cry of my heart. I felt that I could not — and I wished not that I could — go back from that I was, to that which I had been. And yet there was a regret — a feeling of indefinable clinging to the past — a sort of innate conviction that the peaceful, the quiet, the tranquil, was left behind for ever; and even while I joyed in the active and gay existence that Fancy and Hope spread out before me, I looked back to the gone, and yielded it a

sigh, for the calm enjoyments that were lost for ever.

From these ideas, my mind easily turned to the latter part of that day which formed the theme of my thoughts, and I could not help hoping, nay, even believing, that the fainting of Helen Arnault was linked in some degree with concern for me. I had remarked the blush and the agitation when first I came; I had noted her behaviour on the kiss which I had taken; and from the whole I gathered hope.

Yet, nevertheless, I reproached myself for having used a liberty with her, which her dependent situation might lead her to look upon less as a token of love than as an insult, and I resolved to justify myself in her eyes. And how to justify myself? it may be asked. By taking that irrevocable step which would clear all doubt from her mind. But whether it was solely to efface any bad impression that my conduct might have caused, or whether it was, that I gladly availed myself of that pretext to act as my heart rather than my reason prompt-

ed, I do not know. Certain it is, that I loved her with an ardour and a truth that I did not even know myself; and such a passion could not long have been concealed, even if the impatience of my disposition had not hurried me on to acknowledge it to her so soon.

By the time I had taken this resolution, I had climbed high amongst the hills, and was wandering on upon the rocky ridge that overhung the valley of the Gave, when I caught a glimpse of some one strolling slowly onward along the path by the river-side. It wanted but one look to tell me that it was Helen. High above her as I was, I could distinguish neither her figure nor her face; but it mattered not — I felt as well convinced that it was she, as if I had stood within a pace of her, and began descending the rocks as quickly as I could to join her in her walk, watching her as I did so, to see that she did not turn back before I could reach her.

After having gone some way up the valley, looking back every ten steps towards the chateau, as if she had imposed on herself the task

of walking a certain distance, and would be glad when it was over, Helen at length seated herself on a piece of rock, under the shade of an old oak, that started out across the stream ; and there, with her head bent over the running waters, she offered one of the loveliest pictures my eyes ever beheld. She was, as I have said, in the spring of womanhood. Time had not laid his withering touch upon a single grace, or a single beauty ; it was all expanding loveliness — that perfect moment of human existence, when all has been gained and nothing has been lost ; when Nature has done her utmost, and years have yet known nothing of decay.

I approached her as quietly as I could, and when I came near, only said, “Helen,” in a low tone, not calculated to surprise her. She started up, however, and the same blush mantled in her cheeks which I had seen the day before. The good-morrow that she gave me was confused enough ; and, in truth, my own heart beat so fast, that I did not know how to proceed, till I saw her about to return to the chateau.

“ Stay, Helen,” said I, taking her hand, and bringing her again to the rock on which she had been sitting — “ Stay for one moment, and listen to me ; for I have something to say to you, which, perhaps, I may never have an opportunity of saying hereafter.”

The colours varied in her cheek like the hues of an evening sky, and she trembled very much, but she let me lead her back ; and for a moment raising her eyes from the ground, they glanced towards my face, from under their long dark lashes, with a look in which fear and timidity, and love, too, I thought, were all mingled ; but it fell in a moment, and I went on with a greater degree of boldness ; for all that love well, I believe are, in some degree, cowards, and but gain courage from the fears of those they seek to win.

“ There is a secret, Helen,” I said, assuming as calm a tone as I could, “ which I cannot go into Spain without communicating to some one, as it is one of the greatest importance, and I have fixed upon you to tell it to, because, I am sure, you will keep it well and truly ; without,

indeed," I added, "I were by any chance to die in Spain, when you may freely reveal it. Nay, more, I request you would do so to both my parents."

Helen was deceived, and looked up with some degree of curiosity, brushing back the dark ringlets from her clear fair brow. "Will you promise me, Helen," I asked, "by all you hold most sacred, never to reveal my secret so long as I am in life?"

"Had you not better make some other person the depositary of so serious a trust?" She answered, half-afraid, half-curious still — "Think, Count Louis, I am but a poor inexperienced girl — tell it to Father Francis, he will both respect your secret, and counsel you as to your actions."

"He will not do," I replied; "besides, he is going with me. Will you promise me, Helen? It is necessary to my happiness."

"Oh, then I will," replied she, with a tone and a look that went to my very heart, and had almost made me cast myself at her feet at once.

“You must know, then, Helen,” I proceeded, “that there is, on this earth, one sweet girl that I love more than any other thing that it contains,”—while I spoke, she turned so deadly pale, that I thought she was going to faint again. “Listen to me, Helen,” I continued, rapidly, “Listen to me, dear Helen,—I love her, I adore her, and I would not offend her for the world. If, therefore, I pained her for one instant, by robbing her lips of a kiss in the full joy of my return, I am here to atone it, by any penance which she may think fit to impose.”

While I spoke, my arm had glided round her waist, and my hand had clasped one of her's. Helen's head sunk upon my shoulder, and she wept so long, that I could have fancied her deeply grieved at the discovery of my love, but that the hand which I had taken remained entirely abandoned in mine, and that, from time to time, she murmured “Oh, Louis!” in a voice indistinct to any thing but the ears of love.

At length, however, she recovered herself,

and raised her head, though she still left her hand in mine :—" Oh, Louis," she said, " you have made me both very happy, and very unhappy : very happy, because I am sure that you are too generous, too noble, to deceive, even in the least, a poor girl that doubts not one word from your lips ; but I am very unhappy to feel sure, as I do, that neither your father nor your mother, will ever consent that you should wed any one in the class *bourgeoise*, even though it were their own little Helen, on whom they have already showered so many bounties. It cannot be, indeed it cannot be ! The very mention of it would make them wretched, and that must never happen, on account of one who owes them so deep a debt of gratitude."

I tried to persuade her, as I had persuaded myself, that in time they would consent ; but I failed in the endeavour, and as the first agitation subsided, and she began to reflect upon her situation at the moment, she became anxious to leave me.—" Let me return home," she said ; " and, oh, Louis ! if you love me, never try to meet me in this way again, for I shall always

feel like a guilty thing when I see your mother afterwards. I have your secret, and as I have promised, I will keep it: you have mine, and let me conjure you to hold it equally sacred. Forget poor Helen Arnault, as soon as you can, and marry some lady in your own rank, who may love you perhaps as——”

The tears prevented her going on.

“Never, Helen, never!” exclaimed I, still holding her hand; “Stay yet one moment—We are about to part for some months; promise me, before I go, if you would make my absence from you endurable, that sooner or later you will be my wife!”

“No, Louis, no!” answered she firmly, “that I will not promise; for I will never be your wife without the consent of your parents. But I *will* promise,” she added, seeing that her refusal to accede to what I asked had pained my impatient spirit more than she expected, “I will *vow*, if you require it, never, never, to be the wife of another.”

With these words, she withdrew her hand, and left me, turning her steps towards the

chateau; while I, delighted to find myself loved, yet vexed she would not promise more, darted away into the hills; and, as if to escape the pursuit of feelings which, though in some degree happy, were still too strong for endurance, I sprang from rock to rock after the izzards, with agility and daring little less than their own, making the crags ring with my carbine, till I could return home sufficiently successful in the chase, to prevent any one supposing I had been otherwise employed.

CHAPTER VI.

WE were very young to feel such passions as then throbbed within our bosoms, so strong, so keen, so durable ; but our hearts had never known any other—they had not been hardened in the petrifying stream of time, nor had the world engraved so many lines upon the tablets of feeling, as to render them unsusceptible of any deep and defined impression. Our whole hearts were open to love, and we loved with our whole hearts.

The two days of my stay soon drew to an end, and on the morning of the third, my horse and that of Houssaye, together with a mule for Father Francis, were brought into the courtyard ; and, after receiving my mother's counsel and my father's blessing, I mounted and

rode forth with few of those pleasurable feelings which I had anticipated in setting out to explore foreign lands. But love was at that moment the predominant feeling in my bosom, and I would have resigned all, abandoned all, to have stayed and passed my life in tranquillity beside Helen.

It was not to be, and I went forth; but a sensation of swelling at my heart prevented me from either conversing with Father Francis, or noticing the beautiful country through which we travelled—a thing seldom lost to my eyes.

By the time we reached Pierrefitte, however, a distance of about ten miles, the successive passing of different objects, though each but called my attention in the very slightest degree, upon the whole, began to draw my mind from itself; and when proceeding onward, we wound our horses through the narrow gorge leading towards Luz, the magnificent scenery of the pass, with its enormous rocks, its luxuriant woods, and its rushing river, stole from me my feelings of regret, and left me nothing but

admiration of the grand and beautiful works which Nature had spread around. By this time, the day had somewhat waned, for we were obliged to conform our horses' pace to the humour of Father Francis' mule, which was not the most vivacious of animals. The sun had got behind the high mountains on our right, which, now robed in one vast pall of purple shadow, rose like Titans against the sky, and seemed to cover at least one-third of its extent; but the western hills still caught the rays, and kept glowing with a thousand varied hues as we went along, like the quick changes of hope as man advances along the tortuous and varied path of existence.

Amongst other objects, on which the sunshine still caught, was a little woody mound projecting from the surface of the hill, and crowned with an old round tower beginning to fall into ruins. As we passed it, the good priest, who never loved to see me in any of those fits of gloom which sometimes fell upon me—the natural placidity of his disposition leading him to miscomprehend the variability

of mine—pointed out to me the mound and the crumbling tower as the spot where a great victory had been gained over the Moors, in times long gone; and our conversation gradually turned to war and deeds of renown: but Father Francis had abjured the sword, and little appreciated the word *glory*.

“Glory, my dear Louis,” said he, “according to the world’s acceptance of the word, is, I am afraid, little better in general than the gilding with which mighty robbers cover over great crimes. When I was young, however, I thought like you, and I am afraid all young men will think so, till reason teaches them that the only true glory which man can have is to be found in the love of his fellow-creatures, not in their fears. All other glory is but emptiness. You remember the Italian poet’s lines on the field of Cannæ.

I.

“Glory! alas! what is it but a name?

Go search the records of the years of old,
And thou shall find, too sure, that brightest fame,
For which hard toiled the skilful and the bold,

Was but a magic gift that none could hold—

A name, traced with an infant's finger in the sand,
O'er which dark Time's effacing waves are rolled—

A fragile blossom in a giant's hand,
Crushed with a thousand more, that die as they expand.

II.

" I stand on Cannæ—Here, for endless years,
Might fond remembrance dream o'er days passed by.
Tracing this bitter place of many tears:

But mem'ry too has flown, and leaves the eye
To rest on nought but bleakness, and the sigh

To mourn the frailty of man's greatest deeds—
Oh, would he learn by truth such deeds to try,

Lo ! how devouring Time on conquest feeds ;
Forgot the hand that slays, forgot the land that bleeds.

III.

" Time! mighty vaunter ! Thou of all the race
That strive for glory, o'er thine acts canst raise
The monument that never falls, and place

The ruins of a world to mark thy ways.

Each other conqu'ror's memory decays

To heap the pile that comments on thy name ;

Thy column rises with increasing days,

And desolation adds unto thy fame ;

But Cannæ was forgot—Time, 'tis with thee the same."

It is astonishing how chilly the words of
age fall upon the glowing enthusiasm of youth.
As we go on through life, doubtless we gather

all the same cold truths ; but it is by degrees, not all at once, as when the freezing experience of many years is poured forth, like a sudden fall of snow, upon our hearts. Lucky, most lucky is it, that we cannot believe the lessons which the old would teach us ; for certainly if we were as wise when we came into life as we are when we go out of it, there would be nothing great, and very little good, done in the world ; I mean that there would be no enthusiasm of wish or of endeavour.

Nevertheless there is always some damp rests upon the mind from such views of human existence, however warm may be the fire of the heart ; and when Father Francis had repeated his lines upon Glory, he left a weight upon me which I found difficult to throw off.

We were now near Luz, and the good Father's mule—which, by the way, was the best epitome I ever saw of a selfish and interested spirit—as if it entertained a presentiment of approaching hay and oats, suffered its sober legs to be seduced into an amble that speedily brought us to the door of the little cabaret

where we were to pass the night. The accommodations, which its appearance promised, were not of the most exquisite description, and one must have been very charitable to suppose it contained any thing better than pumpkin soup and geese thighs.* Father Francis, however, was tired and exhausted with a longer ride than he had taken for more than fifty years. Houssaye was an old soldier, and I was too young and in too high health to trouble myself much about the quality of my entertainment. Dismounting then, our horses were led into the stable, and we ourselves were shown to the room of general reception, which we found already tenanted by a fat monk, all grease and jollity ; and a thin gentleman in black, who for grinness and solemnity looked like a mourning sword in a black scabbard. It seemed as if nature, having made a more fat and jovial man than ordinary in the capuchin, had been fain to patch up his companion out of the scrapings of her dish.

Father Francis did not appear to like the

* A favourite dish in the small inns of Bearn to this day.

couple, and indeed he had reason, for it wanted no great skill in physiognomy to read in the jovial countenance of the monk a very plain history of the sort of self-denial and sensual mortification which he practised on himself. As for his companion, had I known as much of the world as I do now, I should instantly have understood him to be one of those solemn villains who, if they sometimes lose a good opportunity by want of conversational powers, often catch many a gull by their gravity, and escape many an error into which a talkative rascal is sure to fall by his very volubility.

However, I was at an age when every one, more or less, pays for experience; and if I took upon me to judge the pair of worthies before me, I did not judge them rightly. Immediately after our entrance, Father Francis, as I have said, being very much fatigued, retired to bed, whispering to me that I had better get my supper and follow his example as soon as I could. To this, however, I was not very well inclined, my stock of animal powers for the day not being yet half

exhausted ; and as I saw the Aubergiste beginning to place on the table before the monk and his companion various savoury dishes, for which my ride had provided an appetite, I whispered to Houssaye, and proposed to them to join their table. The matter was soon arranged, my Capuchin professing a taste for good cheer and good company, somewhat opposed to his vows of fasting and meditation, and my thin cavalier, laying his hand on his heart, and making the most solemn bow that his stiff back-bone could achieve.

The viands set before us offered a very palatable contradiction to what the appearance of the house had promised ; and the conversation was as savoury as the dishes, for the monk was a man whose fat and happiness overflowed in a jocose and merry humour ; and even the thin person in black, though his mustachios were rather of a grave cast, would occasionally venture a dry and solemn joke, which was a good deal enhanced by his appearance. The wine, however, was the most thin, poor, miserable abortion of vinegar that ever I tasted ;

and, after having made every tooth in my head as sharp as a drawn sword by attempting to drink it, I inquired of the Capuchin whether any better could be procured within twenty miles for love or money.

“Most assuredly,” answered he, “for money, though not for love. No one gives any thing for love, except a young girl of sixteen, or an old woman of seventy. But the truth is, my host tells us always that this is the best wine in the world, till he sees a piece of silver between the fingers of some worthy Signor who desires to treat a poor Capuchin to a horn of the best Cahors, and then he procures it without jumping as far as the Devil did when he was kicked by St. Denis.”

“And pray how far was that?” demanded I.

“What!” cried the Capuchin, “were you never in Normandy? Well! order the wine, and I will tell you the story as we discuss it—I never could tell a story upon sour puddle like that. Ho! Aubergiste! a flagon of your best for this sweet youth; and mind, I tell you, ’tis a mortal sin to give bad wine when ’tis well paid for, and a Capuchin is to drink it.”

I was not at the time of life to estimate very critically every propriety in the demeanour of a companion for half an hour. Man, unlike the insect, begins the being as a butterfly, which he generally ends as a chrysalis. Amusement, or as it should be called, excitement, is every thing at nineteen; and the butterfly, though it destroys not like the worm, nor hoards like the bee, still flies to every leaf that meets its sight, if it be but for the sake of the flutter. The Capuchin's gaiety amused me, and I saw no deeper into his character. The wine was brought, and having passed once round and proved to all our tastes, the jovial monk set the flagon between himself and me, and began his tale, which, though not the most edifying, was at all events well suited to the person who told it.

THE CAPUCHIN'S TALE.

"Now I pray you, mark me, gentlemen," said the Capuchin, "and remember my story is true. If there be one word of falsehood in it, may this be the last drop I ever shall drink in my life;" and thereupon he filled his cup.

and emptied it to the dregs, with a neat, clear, self-confident toss, calculated to impress one with the idea of his own belief in the veracity of his tale.

“Once upon a time, in a certain town of Normandy, which shall be nameless—there’s *no use naming* towns any more than persons, especially when the Devil has had any thing to do with either—but in this town, which I allude to, there lived a young lady, as good as young ladies generally are, and a great deal handsomer. She had the prettiest foot in the world, and the prettiest ankle, and the prettiest mouth, and the prettiest person altogether ; so that every body was in love with her, high and low, rich and poor ; and the whole town made her an offer. Nevertheless, whether it was prudery, or coquetry, or coldness, or what, matters not one sou to my story ; but nobody would she marry, telling them all civilly that she did not care a straw for them, that they might all go back just as they came, and that she should not mind to see them all drowned the next day, as her grandmother drowned her kittens once a month.

“ Now in the same town was a young priest, the most handsome man in all the world, who moreover had the advantage of being this young lady’s confessor, so that they met regularly once a week ; for she took good care not to let her sins get stale, and had them all off her conscience every Saturday morning. How the business went on I cannot take upon me to say, but the Devil always got behind the young priest when he was reading his breviary ; and whenever he looked at the picture of the Virgin Mary, Satan slipped it quietly out of the book, and in he put that of the young lady, so that there was fine work for the young priest’s fancy——

“ If it is not true, every word of it, may this be the last draught I ever shall drink,” and he replenished his cup and drained it as before.

“ Well, as I was saying,” continued the Capuchin, “ one morning, early, the priest went out to take a walk on the high hill behind the town, and he was just looking out pensively over the valley to another hill beyond, when he saw, tripping up the path before him, the

young lady, his penitent, holding up her petticoat—not to show her ankle, but to keep the hem out of the dust. The young priest looked at her piously—so piously, indeed, that he did not see the Devil slip out from a bush close by, and nich himself up behind an old stone cross that stood thereabout. However, the young lady came up, and made the young priest a low curtsey, with a very dismal face. He, could not do less than ask what was the matter with her, to which she replied that she was very much afraid she had committed a great sin. So then the young priest got into a great flutter. Heaven knows what sin he fancied she had committed, but, being very anxious to hear all about it, he said to her, ‘Well, I have half an hour to spare, and if you think you cannot get on till Saturday, I will confess you now. This place is all convenient.’—‘So it is,’ said the young lady, ‘and nobody can see us.’ So down they sat on the stone at the foot of the cross, and she put her mouth to his ear, and because the stone was not large enough for both of them to sit con-

veniently, he slipped his arm round her waist, just to keep her on——

“If it is not as true as holy writ, may this be the last drop I shall ever drink in my life,” and he applied himself vigorously again to the good wine of Cahors.

“‘Oh, Father Philip,’ said the young lady, ‘I am afraid I have committed a great sin, a terrible sin, an abominable sin,—’ ‘Pish!’ cried Father Philip. ‘A very abominable sin!’ repeated she. ‘Out with it, daughter!’ said the priest. ‘I have fallen in love!’ replied the young lady. ‘The devil you have!’ cried Father Philip. ‘Don’t interrupt her,’ whispered the Devil from behind. ‘I have fallen in love—with a priest!’ cried she, making a violent exertion. ‘Oh! ho!’ said Father Philip. ‘Oh ho!’ said the Devil from behind; but just at that moment, plump! down comes St. Denis and taps the Devil on the shoulder, saying, ‘Holla! Satan, what are you about here?’—‘Mind your own business, Denis,’ answered the Devil, ‘and leave me alone to mind mine.’—‘Come, don’t be insolent,’ replied

the Saint; 'but you shall not make two very good people two very bad ones, while I am in the land of the living ;—so budge !'—' I'll be d—d if I do !' said Satan : ' You don't treat me like a gentleman, *Maitre Denis*, and you know that I am better than you are both by birth and education.'—' You foul-mouthed thief,' cried the Saint ; ' say that again if you dare !'—' What then ?' cried the Devil : ' I do say it again ! Now !' and he set his arms akimbo, and stuck out his under-jaw in the Saint's face. But Saint Denis lost all patience, and, seizing him by the arm, gave him a turn round as quick as light, set his foot just under his tail, and, with one kick, sent him over the valley to the hill on the other side.

" That part of the hill ' was rather sloppy, and the Devil's hoofs sticking in the mud, annoyed him greatly ; so he floundered about in vain to get out, crying out, ' I wish Denis was at the devil for getting me into this mess.' "

" Heartily had the Saint laughed to behold Satan fly across the valley like a tennis ball ; and, seeing him stick on the other side, he took

a hop, skip, and a jump, and coming up with him in a minute, he gave him another kick in the same part, which sent him just as far as the first. Thus they went on, from mountain to mountain, the Saint kicking, and the Devil kicked, all through Normandy, till at length the poor Devil got sore, and was fain to cover himself up behind with the palms of his hands, which made him such a ridiculous figure, that the Saint had nearly split his sides with laughing ; and a few miles beyond Caen, out of sheer compassion, he mustered up a good kick, and pitched him into the sea. After which, St. Denis went back, with the best intention in the world, to see what had become of the priest and the young lady, when he found, to his astonishment, that they had both gone home.*—

* This story has come down word for word to the present times, and is told both in Brittany and Normandy, where many of the hills, which formed the Devil's halting-places, are still shown, and the vacuities over which the Saint is supposed to have kicked him, are to this day termed *Les sauts du Diable*, or the Devil's jumps. The person who told this tale to the writer of these pages repeated it almost literally as above, except that he put the Archangel St. Michael in the place of

And if every word of this story is not true, may this be the last drop I ever drink in my life !” and the Capuchin emptied the flagon.

“ I don’t believe a word of it,” said the man in black.

“ And I say it’s true,” reiterated the Capuchin, laughing till a stag might have jumped down his throat. “ Order another flagon of wine, and I will drink upon it till the death.”

“ Nay,” replied the other, “ I will play you a flagon of the best at trictrac, and treat the company.”

The Capuchin readily accepted the defiance ; the cards were brought, the windows shut, and mine host lighted six large candles in an immense sconce, just behind the Capuchin and myself. The thin gentleman, with his mustachios, was on the other side of the table, with old Houssaye, who, though an indefatigable old soldier, seemed tired out, and, laying his head upon his folded arms, fell asleep.

St. Denis, and made the Devil’s last leap to have been from the famous Mont St. Michel. This, for obvious reasons, has been altered, though the narrator believed it fully more than the Capuchin.

In the mean while, the wine made its appearance, and passed round ; after which, the game began, and the poor player in black lost his flagon of wine in the space of five minutes, much to the amusement of the Capuchin, who chuckled and drank with much profane glee.

The whole scene amused me. I flattered myself I was fond of studying character, and I would have done a great deal to excite the two originals before me to unfold themselves. This they seemed very well inclined to do, without my taking any trouble to bring it about. The thin gentleman got somewhat angry, and claimed his revenge of the Capuchin, who beat him again, and chuckled more than ever. The other's rage then burst forth ; he attributed his defeat to ill luck, and demanded what the Monk meant by laughing, and whether he meant to say he had played ill.

“ Ay, truly !” replied the Capuchin, “ and so ill, that I will answer for it this young gentleman, even if he knows nothing of the game, will beat you for a pistole ;” and, turning round, he asked me, “ if I knew the game ?” or

if I was afraid to play with so skilful an antagonist.

I said that I knew very little of it, but that I was willing to play, and took the cards, only intending to sit one game, seeing that my opponent played miserably ill. He lost as before, and, still cursing his luck, demanded his revenge, which was worse. Nothing could be more diverting than the fury into which he cast himself, twisting up his mustachios, and wriggling his back into contortions, of which I had not deemed its rigidity capable, while the Capuchin chuckled, and, looking over my cards, advised me what to do. At length my adversary proposed to double, to which I agreed, hoping heartily that he would win, and thus leave us as we had sat down ; but fortune was still against him, or rather his bad playing, for he laid his game entirely open, and suffered me to play through it. He lost, and drawing forth a leathern pouch, was about to pay me, when the Capuchin said, that perhaps I would play one more game for the twelve pistoles. The thin gentleman said it would be but generous

of me, but, however, he could not demand, if I chose to refuse. So much foolish shame did I feel about taking his money, that, to tell the truth, I was glad to sit down again, and we recommenced, each staking twelve pistoles. Fortune had changed, however; the dice favoured him, he played more carefully, and won the* game, but by so slight a matter, that it showed nothing but extraordinary luck could have made him gain it.

“ It was now my turn to be anxious. I had lost six pistoles out of the money my father had given for my journey to Spain. How could I tell Father Francis? I asked myself, especially when I had lost them in such a manner and in such company. My antagonist, too, had won by such a mere trifle, that it made me angry; I therefore resolved to try again — and again I lost. The sum was so considerable, I dared not now stop, and I claimed my revenge. My adversary was all complaisance, and, as before, we doubled our stake. An intolerable thirst had now seized upon me, and, pouring out a cup of wine, I set it down beside me

while I played. The game went on, and I never suspected false play, though my opponent paused long between each of his cards : but that was natural, as the stake was large, and I fancied that he felt the same palpitating anxiety that I did myself. To conceal this as much as possible, while he pondered, I fixed my eyes upon the cup of wine, in which the lights of the sconce were reflected very brilliantly. Suddenly, two of the flames seemed to become obscured, for I lost the reflection in the wine. This surprised me ; but I had still sufficient presence of mind to take no notice, and keep my eyes fixed, when presently the lights appeared again. The moment after the same eclipse took place, and, raising my eyes to my opponent's countenance, I perceived that his glance was fixed upon a point immediately above my head.

“ The matter was now clear ; my good friend, the Capuchin, who was kindly giving me his advice and assistance, seeming all the while most anxious that I should recover my loss, and assuring me that it was a momentary run

of ill luck, which must change within five minutes, took care, at the same time, to communicate to my adversary, by signs above my head, the cards I had in my hand, and what I was likely to play.

“ What was to be done I knew not. To be cheated in so barefaced a manner was unendurable; and yet, how to avoid paying what I lost, unless I could prove the fraud, was a question difficult to solve. In this dilemma, I resolved to wake my faithful Houssaye, by touching his foot under the table, at the moment the Capuchin was executing his fraud. What was my joy then, when, on glancing towards the *ci-devant* trumpeter, I perceived his eyes twinkling brightly just above his arms, notwithstanding that he still pretended to sleep, and I immediately saw that he had, from the first, appreciated the talents of my companions.

My resolution was instantly taken, and letting the game proceed to its most anxious point, I saw in the accidental mirror that the wine afforded me, the signs of the worthy Capuchin, proceeding with vast celerity, when,

starting suddenly up, I caught his wrist, as the hand was in the very act, and held it there with all the vigour of a young and powerful frame, excited to unusual energy by anger and indignation.

Houssaye was upon his feet in a moment, and catching the collar of the black Cavalier, who was beginning to swear some very big oaths, he flung him back upon the ground with little ceremony, at the same time dislodging from the lawn frills which adorned his wrists a pair of dice, that the honest gentleman kept there to meet all occasions.

For a minute or two, the presence of mind, which is part of a sharper's profession, abandoned our two amiable companions; the Capuchin especially, remaining without motion of any kind, his mouth open, his eyes staring, and his hands up in the air, with three fingers extended, exactly in the same attitude as he was when I detected his knavery. He soon, however, recovered himself, and jerking his hand out of my grasp, with a force I knew not he possessed, he burst into a fit of laughter — "Very

good ! very good, indeed," cried he ; " so you have found it out. Well, are you not very much obliged to us for the lesson ? Remember it, young man ! remember it, to the last day you have to live ; for you may chance to fall into the hands of sharpers, from whom you may not escape very easily !

The impudence of the fellow was beyond my patience, especially as while he was speaking, I had split one of the dice produced from his companion's sleeve, and found it loaded with a piece of lead the size of a pea. " Whenever I meet with sharpers," said I, " I shall treat them but one way, namely ; if they do not get out of the room whenever they are found out, I shall kick them down stairs, from the top to the bottom."

" Suppose there are no stairs ?" said the Capuchin, coolly, moving towards the door at the same time.

" Then I shall throw them out of the window," replied I.

" I weigh two hundred weight," answered the monk, with the same imperturbable composure.

“Good night, my young Wittol; you’ll be caught yet, though your wings are so free. Come along, Count Crack !” he continued to his companion, whom I suffered to take up his own money after I had repossessed myself of the pistoles which he had won before I had discovered his fraud. “Your game is over for to-night. Good night, fair Sirs, good night ! God bless you, and keep you from *sharpers*,” and leering his small leaden eyes, with a look strangely compounded of humour and cunning, and even stupidity ; he rolled out of the room with his companion, leaving us to our own reflections.

When they were gone, my worthy attendant and myself stood looking at each other for some moments in silence. At length, however, he began laughing. “I saw,” cried he, “what they were about from the first, but I did not think your young wit was as sharp as my old knowledge ; so I pretended to be asleep, and lay watching them. But you served them a famous trick, Count Louis, that you did ; your father would laugh heartily to hear it.”

“ Hush, hush !” cried I, “ for Heaven’s sake, never mention it to my father, or to any one ; but, above all, on no account to Father Francis.” I then exacted a promise to this effect from the good old soldier, feeling heartily ashamed of my night’s employment ; and turning as red as fire every time the thought crossed my mind, that I had been sitting drinking and playing with a couple of vulgar sharpers, who had nearly succeeded in cheating me of all the money which my father had given me from his own limited means. To get rid of these pleasant reflections, I hurried to bed ; and meeting the rotund form of the Capuchin on the stairs, nearly jostled him to the bottom in pure ill-humour.

CHAPTER VII.

EARLY the next morning we arose, and took our departure for Gavarnie. Mine host at Luz, however, drew me aside as we were setting out, and said he hoped we had not suffered ourselves to be cheated by the Capuchin, or his companion, each of whom he was sure was a great rogue, and the Capuchin, he believed, had no more of the monk about him than the gown and shaved head. "Be cautious, be cautious," said he, "and if ever you meet them again, have nothing to do with them." I thanked this candid host for his information, giving him at the same time to understand, that he had better have warned me the night before, and that I took his tardy caution at no more

than it was worth ; after which I spurred on, and joined Father Francis and Housaye, who had not proceeded far on their journey ere I reached them.

Our road to Gavarnie lay through scenery of that grand and magnificent nature, which mocks the feeble power of language. The change was still from sublime to sublime, till the heart seemed to ache at its own expansion. The vast, the wonderful, the beautiful, the sweet, were spread around in dazzling confusion. The gigantic rocks and precipices, the profuse vegetation, the peculiar lustrous atmosphere of the mountains, the thousand rare and lovely flowers with which every spot of soil was carpeted and every rock adorned, the very butterflies which, fluttering about in thousands, seemed like flying blossoms ; all, occupied my mind with new and beautiful objects, till it was almost wearied with the exhaustless novelty. All was lovely, and yet I felt then, and always do feel, in such scenes, a degree of calm melancholy, so undefined in its nature, that I know not in what to seek its cause. Whether it is,

that man feels all the weaknesses and follies of his passions, reproved by the calm grandeur of Nature's vaster works; or whether his spirit, excited by the view of things so beautiful, seem clogged and shackled by the clay to which She is joined, and longs to throw off those earthly trammels which circumscribe her powers to enjoy, to estimate, to comprehend—I know not.

Had the scenery through which we passed needed a climax even more sublime than itself, it could not have been more exquisitely terminated than by the famous Circle of Gavarnie, where above an amphitheatre of black marble fourteen hundred feet in height—perpendicular as a wall, and sweeping round an extent of half a league—rises the icy summit of the Pyrenees, flashing back the rays of the sun in long beams of many coloured light. When we arrived in the centre of the amphitheatre, a light cloud was stretched across the top of the cascade, while the stream, shooting over the precipice above us, fell with one burst full fourteen hundred feet; and, before it reached the ground, also spread out into another cloud. Gazing

upon it, as we did, from a distance, we saw it thus pouring on, between the two, without perceiving whence it came, or whither it went ; so that the long defined line of its waters, streaming from the one indistinct vapour to the other, offered no bad image of the course of mortal time flowing on between two misty eternities. At the same time, the bright diamond heads of the mountains shone out above the clouds, with a grand unearthly lustre, like those mighty visions of heaven seen by the inspired Apostle at Samos.

I could have gazed on it for ever, but the evening light soon began to fail, and as we had to rise early also the next morning, our stay in the amphitheatre was necessarily curtailed. Winding round the little lakes* that the stream forms after its fall, we returned to the filthy hut in which we were to pass the night, often

* Although no such lakes are now in existence, we find in consulting authorities contemporary with the writer of these memoirs, that the valley of Gavarnie, from the village to the Marboré, was in that day completely filled with a chain of small lakes, the basins of which are still evident

looking back by the way to catch another glance of that grand and wonderful scene whose very remembrance makes every other object seem small and insignificant.

By sunrise we were once more upon our way, and passing through what is called the Port de Gavarnie, entered Spain, after having been examined from top to toe by the officers of the Spanish custom-house. A wide and wavy sea of blue interminable hills now presented themselves ; and a guide, whom we had hired at Gavarnie, pointed out a spot in the distance which he called Saragossa. Had he called it Jerusalem, he might have done so uncontradicted by any object visible to our eyes, for nothing was to be seen but hill beyond hill, valley running into valley, till the far distance and the blue sky mingled together, with scarcely a perceptible line to mark the division. Thitherward, however, we wended on, and some hours after reached Hacca, where out of complaisance to Father Francis's mule, we remained for the night, and set off before day-break the next morning, hoping to escape the heat of

the middle of the day. In this we were deceived, making less progress than we anticipated, and enjoying the scorching of a meridian sun till we reached the gates of Saragossa.

On arriving at the inn, we inquired for the Chevalier as we had been directed, but found that he had ridden out early in the morning. He returned, however, soon after, and having welcomed us cordially to Spain, as no apartments could be procured in the house, he led us out to seek for a lodging in the immediate neighbourhood. It was sometime before we could discover one to our mind, for it is with great difficulty that the Spaniards can be induced to receive any foreigner into their dwelling, and even when we did so, we had to undergo as strict an examination by the old lady of the house, as we had bestowed upon her apartments. She said it was but just that both parties should be satisfied, she with us as well as we with her; and not content with asking all manner of questions, which had as much to do with her lodgings, as with her hopes of heaven, she actually turned me round to take a more

complete view of my figure. This was carrying the ridiculous to so high a point, that I burst out into a fit of laughter, which far from offending the good dame tickled her own organs of risibility, and from that moment we were the best friends in the world. Our baggage being brought, and it being agreed that we should eat at the *Posada* with the Chevalier, nothing remained but to distribute the three chambers upon the same floor, which constituted our apartments, according to our various tastes. As Father Francis sought more quiet than amusement, he fixed upon the large room behind, where he certainly could be quiet enough, for if ever even the distant voice of an amorous cat on the house-top reached his solitude, it must have been a far and a faint sound, like the hymns of angels said to be heard by monks in the cells of a monastery. Houssaye took up with the small chamber between the two larger ones, and I occupied the front room of a tall house in a narrow street, whose extreme width might possibly be two ells. Nevertheless, whatever was to be seen, was to be seen from my

window, and my very first determination was to see as much of Spain while I was in it, as I possibly could.

At eighteen, one has very few doubts, and very few fears ; much passion, and much curiosity ; and for my own part, I had resolved if I did not view the Spaniard in all situations, it should not be my fault. In short, by the time I arrived at Saragossa, I was willing to enter into any sort of adventure that might present itself, and though the memory of Helen might act as some restraint upon me, yet I am afraid I wanted that strong moral principle, which ought ever to guide us in all our actions. I make this acknowledgment, because I look upon these sheets to be a sort of confession, which in making at all, I am bound to make true, and though I shall enter into none of those scenes of vice which might lead others by the mere detail into the very errors that I commemorate, be it remembered, that I seek not to show myself at any period of my life as better or purer than I was. With regard to every feeling that came within the direct code of honour, or

even its refinements, I had imbibed them from my earliest days ; but I was a countryman of Henry Quatre, and not without a great share of that weakness, which in the gallant monarch was redeemed by a thousand great and shining qualities. But the love of adventure was my principal failing, which is a sort of mental spirit drinking, as hard to be overcome as the passion for strong waters itself.

I know not why or how, but the Chevalier seemed to have an instinctive perception of my character which almost frightened me, and while Father Francis was seeking in his bags for a parcel which Arnault at Lourdes had entrusted to his care, my keen sighted companion drew me to the window of the front chamber, and after having by a few brief observations on my disposition, shown me that he saw into my bosom even more clearly than I did myself, he warned me of many of the dangers of a Spanish town. “ Remember, my dear Louis,” continued he, “ that I only tell you that such things exist,—I do not tell you to avoid them. Your own good sense, as far as the good sense

of a very young man can go, will tell you how to act, and I am afraid that all men in this world must buy experience for themselves, for if an angel from heaven were to vouch its truths, they would not believe the experience of others. However, loving you as I do—and you do not know how much I love you—there is one thing I must exact—if you want advice, apply to me—if you want assistance, apply to me—if you want a sword to back your quarrel, you must seek none but mine.”

As he spoke, Father Francis entered the room with a look of much consternation and sorrow. “I hope and trust,” said he advancing to the Chevalier, “that the packet which your Procureur Arnault entrusted to me for you is of no great value, for on my honour it has been stolen by some one out of my bags.”

The pale cheek of the Chevalier grew a shade paler, and though no other emotion was visible, that one sign led me to think that the packet was of the utmost import, for never before did I see him yield the least symptom of agitation to any event whatever. “I did expect,”

replied he, in a calm unshaken voice, "some papers of much consequence, but I know not whether this packet you mention contained them. There is no use, my good Father Francis, of distressing yourself upon the subject;" he added, seeing the very great pain which the accident had caused to the worthy old man; "if, by calling to mind the circumstances, you can find a probability of its recovery, we will immediately take measures to effect it. If not, the packet is lost and we will forget it."

"How it has been abstracted or when," answered the good Priest, "I know not. On arriving at Luz, at the end of our first day's journey, I opened my valise on purpose to put it in safety, wrapping it up with some small stock of money that I had laid by for the purpose of doing alms, but both are gone."

"Stolen for the sake of the money!" said the Chevalier, shutting his teeth and compressing his lips, as if to master the vexation he felt. "Well," proceeded he with a sigh, "it is in vain we struggle against destiny. For sixteen

years I have been seeking those papers, but always by some unfortunate accident they have been thrown out of my reach—Destiny wills not that I shall have them, and I will give it up.”

“And what do you mean by Destiny, my dear son?” demanded Father Francis, with the anxious haste of an enthusiastic man who fancies he discovers some great error or mistake in a person he esteems. “Many people allow their energies to be benumbed, and even their religion, by a theory of fatalism which has its foundation in a great mistake.”

“It appears to me, my good Father,” replied the Chevalier with a melancholy smile, “that Fate grasps us, as it were, in a cleft stick, as I have seen many a boor catch a viper—there we may struggle as much as we like, but we are fixed down and cannot escape.”

“Nay, nay,” said Father Francis, “it is denying the goodness of God. Every one must feel within himself the power of choosing whatever way or whatever conduct he thinks fit. A man standing at a spot where two roads sepa-

rate, does he not always feel within himself the power to follow whichever he likes? and yet, perhaps, death lies on the one road, and good fortune on the other."

"But if he is destined to die that day, that day will he die," replied the Chevalier. "And if you allow that God foresees which the traveller will take, of course he must take it, and his free will is at an end."

"Nay, my son, not so," replied the old man. "What you call foresight, is in the Deity what memory would be in man, if it were perfect. It is knowledge. Standing in the midst of Eternity, all is present to the eye of God; and he knows what man will do, as well as what man has done; but that does not imply that man has not the liberty of choice, for it is his very own choice that conducts him to the results which God already knows. When a lizard runs away frightened from before your footsteps, you may know positively that it will fly to its hole, but your knowledge does not affect its purpose; nor would it, if your knowledge was as certain as Omniscience. If you

ask me why, if man's choice will be bad, the Omnipotent does not will it to be good, I say, it is to leave him that very freedom of choice which you deny. Farther, if there were no evil in the world, morally or physically, and it would be easy to show that one cannot exist without the other, what would the world be? There would be no virtue, because there could be no possibility of vice; there would be no passions, because there would be nothing to excite them; there would be no wishes, because privation being an ill, no desire for any thing could possibly exist; there could be no motion, for the movement of one thing would displace another, which was in its proper place before; there would be no action, for there being neither passions nor wishes, nothing would prompt action. In short, the argument might be carried on to show that the universe would not be, and that the whole would be God alone. No one will deny that the least imperfection is in itself evil, and that without God created what was equal to himself,—which implies, as far as the act of creation goes, a

mathematical impossibility,—whatever he created must have been subject to imperfection, and consequently would admit of evil. Evil once admitted, all the rest follows; and if any one dare to ask, why then God created at all? let him look round on the splendid universe, the thousand magnificent effects of divine love, of divine bounty, and of divine power, and feel himself rebuked for thinking that such attributes could slumber unexerted.”

“But,” said the Chevalier, “it appears to me that your argument militates against the first principle of our religion—the Divinity of Christ: for you say it implies an impossibility that God should create what was equal to himself.”

“Christ was not created,” replied the Priest, and laying his hand on his breast he bowed his head reverently repeating the words of Scripture: “This is my only begotten son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Whether the Chevalier retained his own opinions or not I cannot tell; but most probably he did, for certain it is, that nothing is more

difficult to find in any man, than the *faculty* of being convinced. However, he dropped the subject, and never more to my knowledge resumed it.

Father Francis, whose whole heart was mildness and humility, began to fancy after a few minutes that he had been guilty of some presumption in arguing so boldly on the secrets of Providence. "God forgive me," said he, "if I have done irreverently in seeking, as far as my poor intellect could go, to demonstrate by simple reasoning, that which we ought to receive as a matter of faith; but often, in my more solitary hours, in thinking over these subjects I would find a degree of obscurity and confusion in my own ideas, which impelled me to endeavour to clear and to arrange them."

"I am convinced you did very right, my good Father," replied the Chevalier, "and that one great object in the good regulations of one's mind is to obtain fixed principles on every subject which comes under our review, carrying to the examination an ardent desire

for truth ; and to religious enquiries, that profound reverence and humble diffidence of human reason, that so deep and so important a subject imperatively requires.”

Here dropped the conversation, leaving both parties better satisfied with each other than usually happens after any discussion, but more especially where religion is at all involved.

CHAPTER VIII.

MY first care, after finding myself completely settled at Saragossa, was to overcome the difficulties of the Spanish language. I had studied it superficially long before, and, thanks to my Bearnaise tongue, I now accomplished the hardest part of the undertaking, namely, the pronounciation which is very rarely acquired by Frenchmen in general. By the time this was gained, I had been three months in Spain, living in a state of high ease and tranquillity, very much against my will ; finding nothing to excite or to romance upon ; and, at best, meeting with but those little adventures, which are unworthy, if not unfit, for detail. It was not, however, my fault. I went continually to the

Teatro, to the Plaza de Toros, and to all those places where one may most easily get oneself into mischief, without accomplishing my object ; going from one to the other with the most provoking, quiet, uninterrupted facility that fortune could furnish forth to annoy me withal. Every one was calm, polite, and cold ; no one fell in love with me ; no one quarrelled with me ; no one took any notice of me, and I was beginning to think the Spaniards the most stupid, sober, mole-like race, that the world contained, when some circumstances occurred, which, from the very first, excited my curiosity, if they did not reach any more violent passion.

I have said, that the room which I had chosen looked into the street wherein we lodged, and also that that street was very narrow. At first, I had hoped to draw something from this circumstance, having always entertained high ideas of the pleasures and agitations of making love across a street, and for the whole first night after our arrival, I amused myself with fancying some very beautiful lady, with some very horrible guardian, who would find means

of conversing with me from the *jalousies* on the other side.

I was soon undeceived ; a very little knowledge of the localities showing me that the windows opposite to my own were placed in the back of a row of houses, forming one side of the principal street, to which our own was parallel ; and I had reason to believe that none but servants and inferior persons in general dwelt in those rooms, whose windows might communicate with mine. This was a disappointment, and I thought no more of it till one day, when I had been riding in the environs with the Chevalier de Montenero, who, in general, gave me about an hour of his society every day :—the rest of his time was principally spent, I understood, in reading and writing, and in bringing to a conclusion some affairs of importance, which had accumulated during a long absence in the New World, where, my talkative landlady assured me, he had won high honours both as a statesman and a warrior.—On the day which I speak of, however, we had been absent nearly three hours, and, returning some-

what heated, I threw myself down before the open window, with a book in my hand. How I happened to raise my eyes to the opposite houses, I know not; but doing so, I saw the fingers of a hand so fair, that it could belong to no servant, resting on the bars of the *jalousie*, while, at the same time, a very bright pair of eyes glittered through the aperture, apparently rather turned down the street, as if watching for the coming of some one.

My own *jalousie* was drawn for the sake of the shade, so that I could observe without being remarked; and, approaching the window, in a few minutes after, I saw a priest enter at a small door, just below the window, where the eyes were watching. I concluded that this was the Father Confessor, and I took care to see him depart; after which, I partly opened my blind, and remarked, behind the one opposite, the same eyes I had before seen, but now evidently turned towards myself, and I determined not to lose, for lack of boldness, whatever good fortune should fall in my way.

Love, of course, was out of the question:

for I certainly loved Helen now as deeply as ever; and having no excuse, I shall not seek one, nor even try to palliate my fault. The only incentives I had, were, idleness, youth, and a passion for adventure; but these were quite sufficient to carry me headlong on, upon the first mad scheme that opened to my view. Every one, I believe, feels, or must have felt, sensations somewhat similar, when the heart's wild spirit seems rioting to be free, and hurrying on reason, and thought, and virtue, tumultuously along the mad course of passion. What I sought I hardly know. It was not vice—it was adventure.

From that day forward, I was more frequently at my window than any where else; and I cannot say, that the fair object of my watchings seemed, after a time, to find the proximity of her own blind the most disagreeable part of her apartment. Indeed, the weather was so warm and so oppressive, that on more than one occasion she partially opened the *jalousie*, to admit a freer current of air, giving one, at the same time, an opportunity of

beholding one of the loveliest faces and forms I ever beheld, though so shadowed by the semi-darkness of the room, as to throw over the whole a mysterious air of dimness, doubly exciting. Of course the matter paused not here. I had heard and read a thousand tales of such encounters; I was as deeply read in all romances of love, as the Knight of La Mancha was in those of chivalry; and I had recourse to the only means in my power of commencing a communication with my fair neighbour, namely, by signs. At first she withdrew, as if indignant; then endured them; then laughed at them; and, in the end, somewhat suddenly and abruptly seemed to return them, though so slightly, that all my ingenuity would not serve me to comprehend what she sought to express. I had heard that the ladies of Spain were so skilful in finding the means of carrying on these mute conversations, that many a tender tale had been told in silently playing with a fan, and I somewhat wondered to find even one Spanish girl so ignorant of the language of signs. She had evidently, however, en-

deavoured to return an answer to mine, and that was enough to make my heart beat high.

As soon as night followed upon the day which had beheld this gracious and favourable change, I returned to my station at the window. The *jalousies* were closed, and no sign or symptom announced that any one was within for near half an hour, when suddenly I heard them move, and beheld them slowly and cautiously open, to perhaps the extent of three inches. I could see nothing, but that they were open, though I strained my eyes to discover what was beyond. However, after a moment's silence, I had my recompense, by hearing a very soft and musical voice demand, in a low tone, "Are you there?"

"I am," answered I, in the hyperbolic style usual to Spanish gallants—"I am, fairest of earth's creatures! and ready to serve you with life and——"

"Hush!" said the voice quickly; "go instantly to the theatre, and ask for the box marked G. Wait there, whatever betide—and say no more."

The *jalousie* immediately closed, and, snatching up my hat, I prepared to obey the command, when my door opened, and Father Francis appeared with a light.

“In the dark, my dear Louis!” said he, with some astonishment; “What are you doing in the dark? Better come, and read Seneca with me.”

“I am just going to the play,” replied I, holding up my hand to my eyes, as if the sudden light affected them, but, in reality, to cover a certain crimsoning of the cheek, which the mere presence of so good and pure a being called up, in spite of my efforts to prevent it. “They play to-night Calderon’s *Cisma de Inglaterra*.”

“You are all too fond of that bad place, a Theatre,” said Father Francis; “but I suppose, Louis, that it will always be so at your age. I must not forget now, when I can no longer enjoy, that you are in the season of enjoyment, and that I was like you. However, I hope that your love of theatres will soon pass. They were instituted, doubtless, to pro-

mote morality, and to do good, but they are sadly perverted in our day—Well, God be with you !”

I could have well spared the interruption, but more especially the good Father's recommendation to God, when my purpose was not what my own heart could fully approve. Not that I had any formed design of evil—not that I had any wish of wronging innocence—nay, nor of breaking my faith to Helen. 'Twas but excitement I sought ; and though perhaps I wished I had not advanced so far, I was ashamed of drawing back, and I hurried on to the theatre.

A great crowd was going in, and following the course of the stream, I sought for the box marked G. On finding it, I was surprised to discover that it was one of the curtained boxes reserved for the principal officers of the city. An old woman had the keys of these boxes in charge, and to her I applied for admission. The face of surprise which she assumed, I shall not easily forget ; “ Heyday !” she exclaimed, “ let you into the box of the Corregidor ! I

dare say ! Pray, young Sir, where is your order ?”

“Here !” said I, nothing abashed, and resolved to accomplish my object ; and, putting my hand in my pocket, I seemed to search for the order till some persons who were near had passed on. I then produced a pistole, which the old lady found to be an order in so good and authentic a form, that she drew forth the key, and proceeded towards the door, saying, “The Corregidor went out of town this morning, and will not return for two days, so there can be no great harm in letting you in, but keep the curtains close. You can see and hear very well through the chinks, without showing yourself in the Corregidor’s box, I warrant.”

I promised to observe her directions, and entered the box, which was empty. I seated myself behind the curtains, which, drawn completely across the front, hid me from the spectators, though I had still a good view of the stage. The play, indeed, was not what I came to see ; and at first I listened with eager and attentive ears to the sound of every foot that

passed by the door of the box. Actually trembling with anxiety and excitement, I could hear one person after another go by, till the tide of spectators began to slacken, and at last, but the solitary step of some late straggler sounded along the passage, hurrying on to make up for his delay. Two or three times, when the foot was lighter than the rest, or when it seemed to pause near the door, I started up, and my heart beat till it was actually painful to feel it throbbing against my side ; but, after a while, in order to calm such sensations, I endeavoured to fix my mind upon the play, and won by the cunning of the scene, I gradually entered into the passions I saw portrayed.

The play (*La Cisma de Inglaterra*) contained all Calderon's vigour and wit, and also all his extravagance. The first scene, representing the dream of Henry the Eighth, king of England, and his reception of the two letters from the Pope, and from Martin Luther, was too full of petty conceits to engage me for a moment ; but the description of Anne Bullen, as given by

Carlos, in the second scene, caught my young imagination, and the exquisite wit of the court-fool, Pasquín, soon riveted my attention. This character had been allotted to one of the best performers of the company, and it was wonderful what point he gave to the least word of the jester. Calderon had done much, but every theatrical writer must leave much for the player, and in this instance, nothing he could have wished expressed was either omitted or caricatured. It was all true and simple, from the broad childish stare, half folly, half satire, with which he exclaimed, "*Que soy galan de galanes,*" to the face of moralizing meditation, half bewildered, half severe, with which he commented on the king's melancholy—

“Triste està el Rey, de què sirve
Quanto puede, quanto manda
Si no puede, estàr alegre
Quando quiere?”

The play had proceeded for some time; and I was listening with deep interest to the exquisite dialogue between the King and Anne Bullen, in which he first discovers his passion

to her, when the door of the box opened, and a lady entered, wrapped in a black mantilla. Her face was also concealed with a black velvet mask, and though, after shutting the door of the box carefully, she dropped the mantilla, discovering a form on whose beauties I will not dwell, she still retained the mask for some moments; and I could see her hand shake as it leaned on the back of one of the seats. My heart beat so violently that I could scarcely speak, and I would have given worlds for one word from her lips, to which I might have replied. Time, however, was not to be lost, and advancing, I offered my hand to lead her forward; but she raised her finger, saying, in a very low voice "Hush! Is there any one in the box to the left?"

"I have heard no one," replied I, rejoicing to recognize the same tones in which the appointment had been made with me; "Nay, do not tremble so," I added, laying my hand on her's, and I believe the agitation which that touch must have told her I experienced myself, served more to re-assure her than my

words—"Why should you fear, with a friend, a lover, an adorer? Why, too, should you hide your face from one to whom its lightest look is joy? Will you not take off your mask?"

The lady made no reply; but, seating herself in the back part of the box, leaned her head for some time upon her hand, over which the ringlets of her rich black hair fell in glossy profusion. My agitation gradually subsided: I added caresses to tender language—I held her hand in mine—I ventured to carry it to my lips, and I am afraid many a burning word did passion suggest to my tongue. For a moment or two, she let me retain her hand, seeming totally absorbed by feelings which gave no other sense power to act; but at length, she gently withdrew it from mine, and untying a string that passed through her hair, let the mask drop from her face. If her figure had struck me as lovely, how transcendently beautiful did her face appear, when that which hid it was thus suddenly removed. She could not be more than eighteen, and each clear, exquisite feature, seemed moulded after the enchanting specimens of ancient art, but animated with that

living grace which leaves the statue far below. Her lip was all sweetness, and her brow all bland expanse, but there was a wild energetic fire in her eye, which spoke of the strong and ardent passions of her country, and there was also an occasional gleam in it, that had something almost approaching the intensity of mental wandering. Let me not say that those eyes were any thing less than beautiful. They were of those full, dark, thrilling orbs, that seem to look deep into the heart of man, and exercise upon all its pulses a strange, attracting influence, like that which the bright moon holds over the waters of the world, while round them swept a long, black, silky fringe, that shaded and softened without diminishing their lustre by a ray.

As soon as she recovered herself sufficiently to speak, she replied to my ardent professions in language which, though somewhat wild and undefined, left me no doubt of her feelings. She told me too, that she was the daughter of the Corregidór; that her mother was dead, and that her father loved her even to idolatry; that she returned his affection, and that never, even were it to wed a mo-

narch, would she leave him. At the same time, she spoke enthusiastically, even wildly, of love and passion, and to what it might prompt a determined heart. She spoke, too, of jealousy, but she said it was incompatible with love, for that a mind which felt like her's, would instantly convert its love into hate, if it once found itself deceived ; and what was there, she asked, that such hate would not do ?

On this subject she threw out some dark and mysterious hints, which, at any other moment, might have made me estimate the dangerous excess of all her passions, but I was infatuated, and would not see the perils that surrounded the intrigue into which I was plunging. We talked long, and we talked ardently, and in the end, when some little time before the play was concluded she rose to leave me, my brain was in a whirl that wanted little but the name to be madness.

“ Though I have unlimited power over my own actions,” said she, “ even perhaps too much so — for, ungrateful that I am ! I sometimes wish my father loved me less, or more wisely ; but, as I said, though I have unlimited power

over my own actions, some reasons forbade me to-night receiving you in my own house. To-morrow night you may come.—You have remarked,” she added, putting on her mask and wrapping her mantilla round her, “a small door under the window of my dressing-room ; at midnight it will be open—come thither, for there are many things I wish to say.’ She then enjoined me not to leave the theatre till the play was completely over, and left me, my whole mind and thoughts in a state of agitation and confusion hardly to be expressed. I will not say that conscience did not somewhat whisper I was doing wrong ; but the tumult of excited passion, and the gratification of my spirit of romance, prevented me even from calculating how far I might be hurried. There was certainly some vague point where I proposed to stop short of vice ; and I trust I should have done so, even had not other circumstances intervened to save me therefrom. However that may be, let it be marked and remembered, that the steps I took in wrong, by an extraordinary chain of circumstances, caused all the misery of my existence.

CHAPTER IX.

NEVER, perhaps, in my existence—an existence varied by dangers, by difficulties, by passions, and by follies—never did any day seem to drag so heavily towards its conclusion as that which lay between me and the meeting appointed for the following night. It was not alone that impatient expectation, which lengthens time till moments seem eternities, but it was, added to this, that I had to find occupation for every moment, lest tardy regrets should interpose, and mingle bitter with what was ever a sweet cup to me, excitement. Verily do I believe that I crowded into that one day more employments than many men bestow upon a year. I rode through the whole town ; I witnessed the

bull-fight ; I wrote a letter to my father—God knows what it contained, for I know not, and I never knew : I read Plato, which was like pouring cold water on a burning furnace ; I played on my guitar—I sung to it : I solved a problem of Euclid : I read a page of Descartes : and thousands of other things did I do to fill up the horrid vacancy of each long-expectant minute. At length, however, day waned, night came, and the hour approached, nearer and more near. At ten o'clock I pretended fatigue, and leaving Father Francis, who seemed well inclined to consume the midnight oil, I retired to my apartment, as if to bed. Old Houssaye came to assist me, but I made an excuse to send him away, which, though perhaps a lame one, he was too old a soldier not to take at once. He was a man that never asked any questions ; whatever the order was, he obeyed it instantly, and he was unrivalled at the quick conception of a hint. Thus I had scarcely finished my first sentence explanatory of my reasons for not requiring his services, than run-

ning on at once to the conclusion, he made his bow and quitted the room.

Being left alone, two more long hours did I wear out in the fever of expectation. All noises gradually subsided in the town and in the house, and every body was evidently at repose before half-past eleven. This was now the longest half hour of all. I thought the church clock must have gone wrong, and have stopped, and I was confirmed in this idea when I heard the midnight round of the patrol of the holy brotherhood pass by the house, as usual pushing at every door to see that all were closed for the night. Shortly after, however, the chimes of midnight began ; and, with a beating heart, I descended the stairs, having previously insured the means of opening the door without noise. In a moment after the fresh night air blew chill upon my cheek, and conveyed a sort of shudder to my heart, which I could scarce help feeling as a sinister omen : but, closing the door as near as I could, without shutting it entirely, I darted across the street, pushed open the little door and entered. As I did so,

the garments of a woman rustled against me, and I caught the same fair soft hand I had held the former night. It burned like a living fire, and as I held it in mine, it did not return or even seem sensible to the pressure, but my fingers felt almost scorched with the feverish heat of hers.

Cautiously shutting the door, she led me by the hand up a flight of stairs to a small elegant dressing-room, wherein, on the toilet table, was a burning lamp. It shone dimly, but with sufficient light to show me that my fair companion, though lovely as ever, was deadly pale; and attributing it to that agitation which she could not but feel a thousand times more than even I did, I attempted to compose her by a multitude of caresses and vows, which she suffered me to lavish upon her almost unnoticed, remaining with a mute tongue and wandering eye, as if my words scarcely found their way to the seat of intellect. At length, laying her hand upon the hilt of my sword, with a faint smile, she said, "What! a sword! You should never come to see a lady with a sword," and,

unbuckling it with her own hand, she laid it on the table.

“ Now,” proceeded she, taking up the lamp, and leading the way into a splendid room beyond, “ now you must give me a proof of your love;” and she shut the door suddenly behind us, with a quickness which almost made me start.

Her whole conduct, her whole appearance was strange. That she should appear agitated was not surprising; but her eye wandered with a fearful sort of wildness, and her cheek was so deadly, deadly pale, that I scarcely ever thought to see such a hue in any thing living. At the same time, the hand with which she held one of mine, as she led me on, confirmed its grasp with a tighter and a tighter clasp, till every slender burning finger seemed impressing itself on my flesh. “ Have you a firm heart?” asked she at length, fixing her eyes upon me, and compressing her full beautiful lips as if to master her own sensations.

I answered that I had; and, indeed, as the agitation of passion gave way to other feelings,

called forth by her singular manner and behaviour, the natural unblenching courage of my race returned to my aid, and I was no longer the tremblingly empassioned boy that I entered her house.

“It is well !” said she ; “Come hither, then !” and she led me towards what seemed a heap of cushions covered with a large sheet of linen. For a moment she paused before them, with her foot advanced, as if about to make another step forward, and her eye straining upon the motionless pile before her, as if it were some very horrible object ; then, suddenly taking the edge of the cloth, she threw it back at once, discovering the dead body of a priest weltering in its gore. He seemed to have been a man of about thirty, both by his form and face, which was full, and unmarked by any lines of age. It was turned towards me, and had been slightly convulsed by the pang of death ; but still, even in the cold meaning-less features, I thought I could perceive that look of an habitually dissolute mind, which stamps itself in uneffaceable characters ; and there was a dark

determined scowl still upon the brow of death, which to my fancy spoke of the remorseless violation of the most sacred duties. The limbs were contracted, and one of the hands clenched, as if there had been a momentary struggle before he was mastered to his fate, while the other hand was stretched out, with all the fingers wide extended, as while still striving to draw the last few agonizing breaths. His gown was gashed on the left side, and dripping with gore; and it is probable that the wound it covered went directly to his heart, from the great effusion of blood that had taken place.

It was a dreadful sight; and, after looking on it for a few moments in astonishment and horror, I turned my aching eyes towards the lovely girl that had conducted me to such a strange and awful exhibition. She, too, was gazing at it with that sort of fixed intensity of look, which told that her mind gathered there materials for strong and all-absorbing thoughts. "In the name of heaven!" cried I, "who has done this?"

“ I !” answered she, with a strange degree of calmness ;—“ I did it !”

“ And what on earth could tempt you,” I continued, “ to so bloody and horrible a crime ?”

“ You shall hear,” she replied. “ That man was my confessor. He took advantage of his power over my mind—he won me to all that he wished—and then—he turned to another—fairer, perhaps, and equally weak. I discovered his treachery, but I heeded it the less, as I had seen you, and for the first time knew what love was ; but I warned him never to approach me again, if he would escape that Spanish revenge whose power he ought to have known. He came, this very night—warm from the arms of another—and yet dared to talk to me of passion and of love ! thinking me still weak enough to yield to him. Oh ! with what patience I was endued not to slay him then ! I bade him go forth, and never to approach me again—he became enraged—he threatened to betray me—to publish my shame—and he is—what he is !” —There was a dreadful pause :

she had worked herself up by the details to a pitch of almost frenzied rage, and gazing upon the body of him that had wronged her with a flushed check and flashing eyes, she seemed as if she would have smote him again.—“The story is told,” cried she at length; “and now, if you love me, as you have said, you must carry him forth, and cast him into the great fosse of the city.—Ha! you will not! You hate me—you despise me! Then I must speak another language—You shall! Yes, you shall! or both you and I will join him in the grave!” and drawing a poniard from her bosom, she placed herself between me and the door.

“And do you think me so great a coward,” replied I, hastily, “to be frightened into doing what I disapprove, by a poniard in the hand of a woman? No, lady, no;” I continued more kindly, believing her as I did, to be disordered in mind by the intensity of her feelings—“I pity you from my heart—I pity you for the base injuries you have suffered, and even, though I cannot but condemn the crime you have committed, I would do much, very much

to soothe, to calm, to heal your wounded spirit, but——”

I spoke long — gently — kindly to her. It reached her heart—it touched the better feelings of what might have been a fine though exquisitely sensitive mind, and, throwing away the poniard, she cast herself at my feet, where clasping my knees, she wept till her agony of tears became perfectly fearful. I did every thing I could to tranquillize her ; I entreated, I persuaded, I reasoned, I even caressed. There was something so lovely, yet so terrible in it all—her face, her form, her agitation, the sweetness of her voice, the despairing, heart-broken expression of her eyes, that in spite of her crime, I raised her from my feet, I held her in my arms, and I promised to do all that she would have me.

After a time, she began to recover^h herself, and gently disengaging herself from me, she gazed at me with a look of calm, powerful, painful regret, that I never can forget. “Count Louis,” she said, “you must abhor me, and you have, alas ! learned to do so at a moment

when I have learned to love you the more. Your kindness has made me weep. It was what I needed—it has cleared a cloud from my brain, and I now find how very, very guilty I am. Do not take me to your arms; I am unworthy they should touch me—but fly from me, and from this place of horror as speedily as you can, for I will not take advantage of the generous offer you make to do that which I so ungenerously asked. I asked it in madness, for I feel that within the last few hours, my reason has not been with me. It slept—I have now wept, and it is awake to all the misery I have brought upon myself—Go—go—leave me, I will stay and meet the fate my crime deserves; but, oh! I cannot bear to think upon the dishonour and misery of my father's old age!" and again she wept as bitterly as before.

Again I applied myself to soothe her, and imprudently certainly,—perhaps wrongly—insisted upon carrying away the evidence of her guilt, and disposing of it as she had at first demanded. But two short streets lay between the spot where we were and the old boundary of the city, over

which it was easy to cast the body into the water below. At that hour I was not likely to meet with any one, as all the sober inhabitants of the town were by this time in their first sleep, and the guard had made its round some time before. I told her all this, and expressed my determination not to leave her in such dreadful circumstances; so that, seeing me resolved upon doing what I had proposed, the natural horror of death and shame overcame her first regret at the thought of implicating me, and she acquiesced.

As I approached the body for the purpose of taking it in my arms, I will own, a repulsive feeling of horror gathered about my heart, and a slight shudder passed over me. She saw it, and casting her beautiful arms round my neck, held me back with a melancholy shake of the head, saying, "No, no, no!" But I again expressed myself determined, and suddenly pressing her burning lips to mine, she let me go. "Pardon me!" said she, "it is the last I shall ever have, most generous of human beings." And turning away, she

kneeled by her bed-side, hiding her face upon the clothes, while I raised the body of the Priest in my arms, and bore it down-stairs.

Being fortunately of a very strong and vigorous mould, and well hardened by athletic exercises, I could carry a very great weight, but never did I know till then, how much more ponderous and unwieldy a dead body is than a living one. I however gained the street with my burden; and with a beating heart, and anxious glaring eye, proceeded as fast as I could towards the walls. Every thing I saw caused me anxiety and alarm; the small fountain at the corner of the Calle del Sol, made me start and almost drop the body; and each shadow that the moon cast across the street, cost me many a painful throb. At length, however, I reached the old rampart, where it looks out over the olive grounds, and advancing hurriedly forward, I gave a glance around to see that no one was there, and cast the corpse down into the fosse which was full of water; I heard the plunge of the body and the rush of the agitated waters, and a shudder passed over me to think

of thus consigning the frail tabernacle, that not long since had enshrined a sinful but immortal spirit, to a dark and nameless grave. All the weaknesses of our nature cling to the rites of sepulture, and at any time I should have felt, in so dismissing a dead body to unmourned oblivion, that I was violating the most sacred prejudices of our nature ; but when I thought upon the how, and the wherefore, my blood felt chill, and I dared not look back to see the full completions of that night's dreadful deeds.

My heart was lightened, however, that it was now done, and I turned to proceed home, having had enough of adventure to serve me for a long while. Before I went I gave an anxious glance around to see whether any one was watching me, but all seemed void and lonely. I then darted away as fast as I could, still concealing myself in the shadowy sides of the streets, and following a thousand turnings and windings to insure that my path was not tracked. At length, approaching the street wherein I lived, I looked round carefully on all sides,

and seeing no one, darted up it, sprang forward and pushed open the door of my lodging. At that moment a figure passed me coming the other way; it was the Chevalier de Montenero, and though he evidently saw me, he went on without remark. I closed the door carefully, groped my way up to my own chamber, and striking a light, examined my doublet, to see if it had received any stains from the gory burden I had carried. In spite of every precaution I had taken, it was wet with blood in three places, and I had much trouble in washing out the marks, though it was itself of murray-coloured cloth, somewhat similar in hue.

Difficult is it to tell my feelings while engaged in this employment—the horror, the disgust, at each new stain I discovered, mingled with the painful anxiety to efface every trace which the blood of my fellow being had left. Then to dispose of the water, whose sanguine colour kept glaring in my eye wherever I turned, as if I could see nothing but it, became the question; and I was obliged to open

the casement, and pour it gently over the window-sill, without unclosing the *jalousies*, so as to permit its trickling down the front of the house, where I knew it must be evaporated before the next morning. This took me some time, as I did it by but very cautious degrees ; but then, when it was done, all vestiges of the deed in which I had been engaged was effaced, and to my satisfaction I discovered, on examining every part of my apparel with the most painful minuteness, that all was free and clear.

Extinguishing my light, I now undressed and went to bed, but of course not to sleep. For hours and hours, the scenes in which I had that night taken part, floated upon the blank darkness before my eyes, and filled me with horrible imaginations. A thousand times did I attempt to banish them, and give myself up to slumber, and a thousand times did they return in new and more horrible shapes ; till the faint light of the morning began to shine through the openings of the blinds, when I fell into a disturbed and feverish sleep. It was no relief—it was no oblivion. The same

dreadful scenes returned with their full original force, heightened and rendered still more terrific by a thousand wild accessories that uncontrolled fancy brought forward to support them. All was horror and despair ; and I again woke, haggard and worn out, as the matin bell was sounding from the neighbouring convent : I tried it once more, and at length succeeded in obtaining a temporary forgetfulness.

CHAPTER X.

I WAS still in a most profound sleep, when I was woke by some one shaking me rudely by the arm, and starting up I found my chamber full of the officers of justice. By my side stood an Alguazil, and at my table, a sort of Escribano was already taking a precise account of the state of the apartment; while in conjunction with him, various members of the Holy Brotherhood were examining without ceremony every article of my apparel.

For a moment or two, the surprise, mingled with the consciousness of what might be laid to my charge, confounded and bewildered me, and I gazed about upon all that was taking place with the stupid stare of one still half

asleep. I soon, however, recovered myself; and hurriedly determined in my own mind the line of conduct that it was necessary to pursue, both for the purpose of saving myself, and shielding the unfortunate girl, of whose crime I doubted not that I should be accused.

The Alguazil was proceeding, with a face in which he had concentrated all the stray beams of transmitted authority, to question me in a very high tone respecting my occupations of the foregoing night; when I cut him short, demanding what he and his myrmidons did in my apartment, and warning him, that if he expected to extort money from me by such a display, he was labouring in vain. The worthy officer expressed himself as much offended at this insinuation as if it had been true, and informed me that he had come to arrest me on the charge of having the night before murdered in cold blood one Father Acevido, and cast him into the fosse below the old wall. He farther added, that a messenger had been sent for the Corregidor, who was at a small town

not far off, and that he was expected in an hour.

“Well, then,” replied I boldly, “wake me when he comes, and make as little noise as possible at present,” and I turned round on my other side, as if to address myself to sleep. My real purpose, however, was twofold: to gain time for thought, and to avoid all questions from the Alguazil, till I had learned upon what grounds I was accused.

But in this I was defeated by Father Francis, who interfered with the very best intentions in the world, and advancing, addressed me in French, whereupon the Alguazil instantly stopped him, declaring he would not have any conversation in a foreign tongue.

“Houssaye!” cried I, turning to the old soldier, and pointing to the Alguazil, while I spoke out in Spanish.—“If that fellow meddles any more kick him down-stairs—and now, my good Father, what were you about to say?”

This conduct, impudent as it was, I well knew was the only thing that could save me

~~there being~~ questioned and cross-examined by
~~the inferior~~ officers before the arrival of the
~~corregidor~~. If I answered, I might embarrass
myself in my after-defence ; and if I refused to
answer, my contumacy would be construed into
guilt ; all that remained, therefore, was to treat
the Alguazils with a degree of scorn which
would check their interrogation in its very
commencement, and which was in some degree
justified by the well known corruption and
mercenary character of the inferior officers of
the Spanish police. This proceeding seemed to
have the full effect which I intended, for the
pompous official not only ceased his questions,
but at the hint of being kicked, suffered Father
Francis to go on, judging very wisely, that,
however justice might afterwards avenge him,
his posteriors would at all events suffer in the
mean time.

“ My dear Louis,” said the good Priest,
“ you had better rise and clear yourself from
the accusation of these men. Every one in this
house knows your innocence, but here is an
officer of the *real hacienda*, without, who swears

that he saw the murderer enter this house, and we have all suffered ourselves to be examined previous to your having been disturbed. Rise, then, and when you have dressed yourself, permit him to see that you are not the person, and probably by answering the questions of these people, you may save yourself from being dragged before the Corregidor, like a culprit."

I replied with the same bold tone which I had at first assumed, and still speaking aloud in Spanish, "In regard to answering any questions put to me by these knaves, who are but as the skirts of the robe of office, I shall certainly not demean myself so far ; but, to whatever the Corregidor chooses to demand, I will reply instantly ; for I am sure that he will not countenance a plot of this kind, which, beyond all doubt, has been contrived to extort money from a stranger ; I will rise, however, as you seem to wish, and then all the world may look at me as long as they will."

I accordingly rose and dressed myself; putting on, though I own it was not without much reluctance, the same murray-coloured suit I

had worn the night before. As soon as I was dressed, the officer of the *real hacienda* was called in, and immediately pointed me out, saying, "That is the man!" in so positive a tone, that it required all the resolution I possessed, to demand, with a contemptuous smile, "Pray, Sir, how much is it you expect to extort from me, by averring such a notorious falsehood?—Take notice, if it be above half a rial, you shall not have it."

"If you were to give me all that you possess, young gentleman," answered the man, calmly and civilly, "I would still aver the same thing—that you are the man who cast the dead body of Father Acevido into the fosse last night, while I was on my duty, seeing that no contraband things were brought into the city. I tracked you through the streets till you entered this house, and I took good care to remark your person, so as to identify it any where."

The man was so clear in his statement, and I knew it to be so true, that the blood mounted up into my face, in spite of every effort I could

make to maintain my air of scornful indignation.

“Ha ha! you colour!” said the Alguazil;
“What do you say to that, my young Don?”

“I say!” replied I, turning upon him fiercely,
“that this man’s story has been well contrived, and that he tells it coolly; but, depend on it, my good friend, when I have cleared myself of this, my remembrance and thanks shall light upon your shoulders in the most tangible form I can discover. But now, take me to the Corregidor; only, while I am gone, let some honest person stay and watch these gentry who are fingering my apparel, or they will save Señor Escribano the trouble of making a very long catalogue.”

A crowd of persons were round the door, gossiping with an Alguazil, who had been left there as a sort of guard, and the moment I was brought out, the noise they were making very much increased with the vociferous delight which all vulgar minds experience on beholding criminals. ’Tis a strange, devilish propensity that in human nature—The child loves to

torture the fly or the worm, the serf runs to see the victim struggling at the gallows, or writhing on the wheel; and, it is in the child and the vulgar that human nature shines out in its original metal, unsilvered over by the false hue of education. Those who have best defended man, attribute his passion for scenes of blood and horror, to the renewed feeling which he thence derives of his own security. And is there, then, no way of showing him not cruel, but by proving him base? Must he be ever vilely selfish, if he is not savagely brutal?

The populace roared, as I came forth, with such a shout, as we may suppose those refined tigers the Romans bestowed on the devoted gladiator when he entered the arena. I felt certain the sounds must reach another person, to whose bosom they would convey greater pangs than even to mine; and though I could not pause to observe any thing minutely, as I was hurried on, I glanced my eye up towards the window on the other side of the way, and I am sure I saw a female hand rest on one of the bars of the *jalousie*.

Scarcely two minutes were occupied in bringing me round to the great entrance of the Corregidor's house, and finding that he had not arrived, the Alguazils made me sit down in a large hall, keeping every one else out, even Father Francis and Houssaye; and enjoying my society, uninterrupted by the presence of any one but the servants of the Corregidor.

Whether it was done on purpose, or not, I cannot say; but, first one dropped away, and then another, till I was left alone with the chief Alguazil, who, the moment they were all gone, addressed me with a meaning sort of smile; "Now, young Sir," said he, "what would you give to get off?"

Doubtless, as many bargains are made in halls of justice, as on the exchange, and I was even then very well aware that such is the case; but I knew not whether, if my offers did not equal the incorruptible officer's expectation, my words might not be made use of against myself, and therefore I simply replied "Nothing!" At the same time, I cannot deny, that I would willingly have given my whole inherit-

ance to have been safe on the other side of the Pyrenees.

No long time was allowed for deliberation, for a moment after the Corregidor arrived, and, as if by magic, I found myself instantly surrounded by all the Alguazils and servants who had before disappeared.

The magistrate did not pass through the hall wherein I was detained, but after a few minutes, probably spent by him in receiving an account of the whole transaction, an officer approached, and led me to a small audience-room, in which he was seated. Before him was a table with a clerk, and behind him two doors leading to the domestic parts of his dwelling.

He appeared to me about sixty, and was as noble a looking man as I had ever beheld. In his face I could trace all his daughter's features, raised and strengthened into the perfection of masculine beauty ; and, though his hair was as white as snow, and time had laid a long wrinkle or two across the broad expanse of his forehead, yet age, in other respects, had dealt mildly with him, and left the fine arch of his

lip unbroken, nor stolen one ray of light from his clear intellectual eye.

As I approached the table at which he was seated, he gazed at me with a steady, but yet a feeling glance, and pointed to a seat, "I am sorry, Sir," he said, "that one so young, so noble in appearance, and especially a stranger to this country, should be accused before me of a great and dreadful crime, by an officer, who, having in all relations of life conducted himself well, leaves no reason to suppose he acts on culpable motives. The duty of my office is a strict one; and whatever prepossession I may feel in your favour, all I can do is to receive the accuser's evidence before you; and then, if no evident falsehood appears in his testimony, to order your detention till the case can be examined at large, and judged according to its merits."

In the calm dignity of his manner, and the mild firmness of his tone, there was something far more appalling to my mind, knowing well, as I did, the truth of the charge against me, than any menaces could have been. I felt no

inclination, and indeed no power, to treat the accusation with that scorn and indignation which I had formerly affected, but advancing towards the table at which the Corregidor was seated, I replied as calmly as I could, "You seem, Sir, well inclined to do me justice, and I must consequently leave my fate in your hands; but, before you commit me to a prison, which is in itself a punishment, and consequently an act of injustice to an innocent man, permit me to make one or two observations in my own defence."

"Certainly," replied the Corregidor; "I hold myself bound to attend to every reasonable argument you can adduce, although I am afraid my duty will not permit me to interpose between an accused person and the regular course of investigation. But proceed!"

"In the first place, then," I replied, "I have to protest my innocence of the blood which is laid to my charge, in the most solemn manner—on my honour as a gentleman, on my faith as a Christian. In the next place, I have to ask whether there exists the least probability that I

should murder in cold blood a stranger, with whom I had no acquaintance ; for I defy any one to show that I knew one single priest in this city, or was ever seen to speak to one. In addition to this, which makes my guilt highly improbable, let me beg you to examine my preceptor, my valet, and the proprietors of the house in which I lodge."

"I am afraid that will be impossible in this stage of the business," replied the Magistrate, "without some glaring discrepancy appears in the accuser's testimony ; but let him be called in."

Hitherto the audience-chamber had been occupied alone by the Corregidor, his secretary, two Alguazils, and myself, but the moment afterwards the doors were opened, and a rush of people took place from without, filling up the space behind me. The presence of the multitude made my heart beat, I confess, and turning my head, I beheld amongst other faces those of Father Francis,² of Houssaye, of the landlady of our dwelling, and lastly, of the Chevalier de Montenero. The last was a counte-

nance I wished not to behold, and the one glance of his eye pained me more than all the busy whispering and observations of the mob. The officer of the *real hacienda* was now called forward, and immediately swore positively to my person, as well as to having tracked me through various turnings and windings to the end of the street wherein I lodged, from whence he saw me enter the house in which I was taken. He then clearly described the manner in which I had cast the body over into the water, and its state and situation when he found it, after having called the city guard to his assistance.

At this moment the Chevalier advanced through the crowd, and, passing round the table, took a seat beside the Corregidor, who seemed to know him well. "Will you permit me," said he, addressing the Magistrate, "to ask this man a few questions? I am deeply interested in the young gentleman whom he accuses, and who, I feel sure, is incapable of committing an action like that attributed to him. Do you permit me?"

The Corregidor signified his assent, and the

Chevalier, without a word or a look towards me, proceeded to question my accuser with the keen and rapid acumen of one long accustomed to hunt out truth through all the intricacies in which human cunning can involve her. He did not, indeed, attempt to puzzle or to frighten him, but by what he wrung from him he gave a very different colouring to his evidence against me. He made him own that he had but seen me in the shadow; that I had never for a moment emerged into even the moonlight; and that when he arrived at the end of the street where I lodged, he was so far behind that he but caught a glimpse of my figure entering the house. The Chevalier did more; he drew from him an acknowledgment that he had entertained some doubts as to which house it was; and then he argued how liable one might be to mistake the person of another under such circumstances. "Even I myself," said the Chevalier, in a tone full of meaning to my ears, "even I myself have been sometimes greatly deceived in thinking I recognized those even I know best, when circumstances have afterwards

proved that it could not have been them," and he glanced his eye to my face with a look that I could not misunderstand.

The man, however, still swore decidedly to my person; and my good friend the pompous Alguazil, probably to repay me for the disrespect with which I had treated him in the morning, now advanced, and pointed out to the Corregidor that my pourpoint had been washed in more than one place.

This was quite sufficient. A loud murmur ran through the crowd; the Chevalier clenched his teeth and was silent, and the Corregidor's brow gathered into a heavy frown,—but as he was in the very act of ordering me to be conveyed to the town prison, one of the doors behind him opened, and a servant entering, whispered something in his ear.

"I cannot come now!" cried the Corregidor hastily, "I am busy—engaged in the duties of my office, and I will not be disturbed."

"Then I am to give you this, Sir," replied the servant, and, placing in his hand a small note, he bowed and retired.

The Corregidor opened the paper and glanced his eye over its contents. As he did so, his cheek became deadly pale, and the ball of his eye seemed straining from its socket. “Wait ! wait !” cried he at length to the Alguazils, “wait till I come back !” and, starting from his seat, he retired by the same door which had admitted the servant.

As soon as he was gone, the restraint which respect for his person and office had before imposed upon the people, seemed at once thrown off, the murmur of voices canvassing the whole affair became loud and general, and many persons advanced to look at me, though the officers would not allow any one to speak to me. The Chevalier turned away, and walking to one of the windows, folded his arms upon his breast, and continued to look into the street, without offering me even a look of consolation. I understood all the doubts that now tenanted his bosom, and yet, though I knew their cause, I felt hurt and offended that he should entertain them. In the mean while I heard the tongue of our good landlady, whose favour I

had won by joking with her whenever I met her on the stairs, now loud in my defence ; and however weak an organ[^] may seem the tongue of an old woman, it in this instance, by continual reiteration and replication, completely effected a revolution in the popular feeling towards me ; so much so indeed, that two monks, who had before been whispering that I ought to be given up to the holy Inquisition, now took a different view of the case, and declared they believed me innocent.

Half an hour—an hour elapsed, and yet the Corregidor did not return, during which time the feelings of my heart may easily be conceived. At length, however, he came, but never, before or since, have I beheld such a change take place in any man so rapidly. I have seen age come on by slow degrees, one year after another, stealing still some faculty or some power, till all was nothing—I have seen rapid disease wear quickly away each grace of youth, and each energy of manhood ; but never but that once have I seen the pangs of the mind, in one single hour, change health,

and vigour, and noble bearing, to age, infirmity, and almost decrepitude.

A murmur of astonishment and grief ran through the people, by whom he was much beloved. Casting himself recklessly in the chair, he turned to his secretary. "Call the witnesses," said he, "that the accused proposed to adduce. — This case is an obscure one. — Take their evidence—I am not capable."

The clerk immediately desired me, in the name of the Corregidor, to bring forward any persons who were likely to disprove the testimony against me.

Father Francis was of course the first I called. He swore that I had left him, and entered my own chamber for the purpose of going to bed, at ten o'clock on the night of the murder. He farther said, that he had remained reading till one in the morning, and must have heard me if I had gone down the stairs,—which, indeed, would have been the case if my step had been as heavy as it usually was.

As to Houssaye, he swore through thick and thin, and, could he have known my wishes,

would have witnessed any thing I liked to dictate. In the first place, he declared he had undressed me, and seen me in bed. In the next, he vowed he had washed out several oil spots upon my doublet the day before; and in the third, that he lay with his door, at the top of the stairs, open all night; that he had never closed an eye till daybreak, and, finally, that I had certainly never passed that way. "I might have got out at the window, it was true," he observed, "but that, my window being forty feet from the street, it was not very probable I should have chosen such a means of descent."

I need scarcely say, that though his deposition was assuredly a very splendid effort of genius, yet there was nevertheless not a word of truth in it.

The next person I called was the landlady, who gave evidence that she found the door (which she had fastened the night before with various bolts, bars, and locks, which she described,) exactly in the same state as that in which she left it; and, in the end, availing herself of her privilege, she turned round, and

abused my accuser with great volubility and effect.

The uncertain wind of popular opinion had now completely veered about, and many of those who were behind me scrupled not to proclaim aloud that I had established my innocence, the news of which, spreading to a multitude of persons collected without, produced a shout amongst them, which seemed painfully to affect the Corregidor. "Hush!" cried he, raising his hand—"Hush! I entreat—I command! This young gentleman is evidently innocent; but do not insult my sorrow. My good friends and fellow-citizens," he proceeded, making a great effort to speak calmly, "I have always tried to act towards you all as a common father, and I am sure that you love me sufficiently to leave me, and retire quietly and in silence, when I tell you, that I have now no other children but yourselves. My daughter—is dead!" and covering his eyes with his hands, he gave way to a passionate burst of tears.

A deep silence reigned for a moment or two

amongst the people, as if they could scarcely believe what they had heard: then one whispered to another, and dropping gradually away, they left the audience chamber. A momentary murmur was heard without, as the sad news was told and commented in the crowd: it also died away, and all was silence.

But what were my own sensations? I can hardly tell. At first I stood as one thunder-struck, with power to feel much, but not to reason on it. It seemed as if I had killed her; and for long I could not persuade myself that I was in no way accessory to her death. After a moment or two, however, my thoughts were interrupted by the Corregidor, who recovered himself, and, wiping the tears from his eyes, rose and turned towards Father Francis.

“Your pupil, Sir,” said he, in a calm firm tone, “is free; but yet, notwithstanding the melancholy event which has occurred in my family, I will ask a few minutes’ private conversation with him, as I wish to give him some advice, which he may find of service. He shall return home in half an hour. Signor Conde de

Montenero," he proceeded, speaking to the Chevalier, "I know you will pardon me in leaving you. Young gentleman, will you accompany me?"

The Chevalier bowed, and retired with Father Francis and Houssaye, and the Corregidor led me into a long gallery, and thence into a private room beyond.

On the table lay my sword, which I had left behind the night before, forgetting it in the agitation of the moment. The Corregidor shut the door, and pointed to the weapon with a look of that unutterable, heart-broken despair, which was agonizing even to behold. The thoughts of all that had past — the lovely enchanting girl that he had lost — his passionate affection towards her — the knowledge he must now have of her crime — the desolation of his age — the void that must be in his heart — the horrid absence of love and of hope — the agony of memory — I saw them all in that look, and they found their way to every sympathy of my nature.

I must have been marble, or have wept — I

could not help it ; and the old man cast himself upon my neck, and mingled his tears with mine.

“ Count Louis,” said the Corregidor, after we had somewhat mastered our first agitation, “ I know all. My unfortunate child, before the poison she had taken had completed her fatal intention, told me every thing. Her love for you — your generous self-sacrifice to her — all is known to me. You pity me — I see you pity me. If you do, grant me the only solace that my misery can have — respect my poor child’s memory — promise me — and I know your promise is inviolable, never while you are in Spain, or to a Spaniard, on any account, or for any reason, to divulge the fatal history, of which you are the only depositary ; and even if you tell her story in other countries, oh ! add that her crimes were greatly her weak father’s fault, who, with a foolish fondness, gave way to all her inclinations, and thus pampered the passions that proved her ruin and her death.”

I could not refuse him ; I promised, and

was glad, at least, to see that the assurance of my secrecy took some part, even though a small one, from the load of misery that had fallen upon him. He spoke to me long and tenderly, advising me to quit Spain as soon as possible, lest the Inquisition should regard the matter as within their cognizance, from the murdered man having been a priest. At length I took leave of him, renewing my promise, and returned home, with a heart saddened and rebuked, but I hope amended and improved.

CHAPTER XI.

WITH a slow and thoughtful step I mounted the staircase, glad to escape, by the quiet tardiness of my return, the importunate congratulations which my landlady, attributing my delivery entirely to her own eloquence, was prepared to shower upon me as soon as I came back.

Cutting her off then from this very laudable exercise of her tongue and gratification of her vanity, I ascended the stairs, as I have said, in silence, and was first met by Father Francis, who, after embracing me, drew me into his own apartment, and informed me that a letter had arrived from my father, requiring my immediate return to France ; “ and, God be praised !

my dear son," said the old man, "that you are at liberty to quit this dark and fearful country, and return to your parents and happy native land. But go," continued he, "into your own apartment, where your good friend the Chevalier waits you. I know not why, but he seems in a strange agitation, speaks abruptly, and appears to me displeased, though with what I know not, without it be your sudden recall to your own home. In truth, I never saw him so affected."

I well understood the meaning of the Chevalier's agitation; I myself was agitated, and embarrassed how to act, and consequently I acted ill.

When I entered, my friend was walking up and down the room, with his eyes fixed upon the ground; but, on hearing my step, he raised them, and fixed them sternly on my face. The fear of appearing guilty, and the impossibility of clearly exculpating myself, had a greater effect upon my countenance than perhaps real guilt would have had, and the rebellious blood flew up with provoking hurry to my cheek.

Angry at my own embarrassment, I resolved to master it; but the effort communicated something of bitterness to my manner towards the Chevalier, who had hitherto said nothing to call it forth. He remarked it, and, striding towards the door, which I had left open, he shut it impatiently; then turned towards me, and, with a straining eye, demanded — “Tell me, Count Louis de Bigorre, after all the evidence brought forward to prove that you passed last night in this house — tell me, was it, or was it not you, that I saw enter this door at two o'clock this morning?”

“I should think,” replied I coldly, “that what satisfied the Judge before whom I was accused, would be enough to satisfy any one really my friend.”

“Not when their own eyes were evidence against you,” answered the Chevalier indignantly. “I thought you incapable of a subterfuge. Once more, was it you, or was it not?”

“Though I deny your right to question me,” I replied, growing heated at the autho-

rity he assumed ; “ yet to show that I seek no subterfuge, I answer it was ; but, at the same time, I repeat, that I am innocent — perfectly innocent of the crime with which I was charged.”

“ Pshaw !” cried the Chevalier, with an air of scorn that almost mastered my patience — “ Pshaw !” and, turning on his heel, he quitted the room and the house.

When what we have done produces a disagreeable consequence, whether we have really acted right or not, we are apt to call to mind every line of conduct which we might have pursued, and fix upon any other as preferable to that which we have adopted. Thus, no sooner had the Chevalier left me, than I thought of a thousand means whereby I might have persuaded him of my innocence, without breaking my promise to the Corregidor ; and I resolved to seek him, as soon as the preparations for my return to France were completed, and explain myself, as far as I could, without violating the confidence reposed in me.

My resolution, however, came too late.

About an hour after his departure, one of the servants of the house, where he lodged, brought me a letter from him, of the following tenure :—

“ I leave you, and for ever. You have done me the greatest injury that one man can inflict upon another. You have shown me what human nature really is, and you have made me a misanthrope. I had watched you from your infancy, and I had fancied that, amongst the many faults and errors, from which youth is never exempt, I perceived the germ of great and shining qualities of heart and mind. I devoted myself to cultivate them to maturity, and to train them aright. Perhaps I was selfish in doing so ; for what man is not selfish ; but bitter is the atonement which you have forced me to make. Adieu ! seek me not henceforth — know me not if we meet — be to me as a stranger. Though, for the sake of your unhappy father, I rejoice in your escape from the punishment your crime deserves ; my interest in yourself is over, and I would fain

rase out from the tablets of memory all that concerns one so unworthy of the esteem I once entertained for him."

This was hard to endure, especially from one that I both respected and loved. My heart swelled with a mixture of indignation and sorrow, both at the loss of a friend, and at his unjust suspicions; and though my consciousness of innocence guarded me from bitterer regrets, yet it increased my painful irritation at the wrong I suffered, and at my disappointment in not being able to exculpate myself. Occupation, however — in every situation of life the greatest blessing and relief — now came to my aid, and called my attention for a time from the dark and gloomy views that the circumstances of my fate presented at the moment. Our departure was fixed for the next morning, and all the thousand petty accumulations of business, which always hang about the last day of one's sojourn in any place, now came upon me at once.

The weather had much altered since our ar-

rival at Saragossa, for three months had tamed the lion of the summer, and it was not, at all events, heat that we had to fear on our journey. Cold autumn winds were now blowing, and saluted us rudely the moment we got beyond the sheltering walls of the city, piercing to our very bones. I would have given a pistole for half an hour of the hot-breathed *Siroc* to warm the air till we could heat ourselves by exercise.

As we approached the mountains, however, it became colder and more cold, and the prospect of their snowy passes, fell chill and cheerless upon our anticipations. Yet there was something vast and majestic in their aspect, which raised and elevated the mind above the petty cares and sorrows of existence. I had been grave, I had been gloomy—I had been perhaps peevish, but the contrast between the transitory littleness of all human things, and the eternal grandeur of such objects, reprov'd the impatient repinings of my heart. I felt a consolation in looking upon them as they stretched along before me, in the same bold

towering forms that they had presented unmemoried centuries ago. It seemed as if they said, “Ages and generations, nations and languages, have passed away and been forgotten, with all their idle hopes and vain solitudes, while we have stood unmoved, unaged, unaltered. Even Time, the inexorable enemy of all man’s works, lays not upon us his profaning finger, and while he overthrows the arch that records man’s glory, and hurls down the column that monuments his grave, he dares not spoil the fabrics of that great God who created him and us.”

Under the influence of such thoughts, the recollections of the last two days gradually lost themselves, and, though I rode along, grave, and perhaps melancholy; my melancholy was not of that bitter and gloomy nature produced by worldly cares and griefs. Father Francis was well acquainted with the many changes of my mood, and, consequently, found it not at all extraordinary that I was silent and thoughtful; but, attributing my seriousness to the events which had happened at Saragossa, he

wisely let them sleep, hoping that they would soon pass from my memory.

Towards the evening, on the second day of our journey, we arrived at a little village consisting of about half a dozen shepherds' huts, situated at the very foot of the mountains ; and here we learned that the *Port de Gavarnie*, by which we intended to have entered France, was completely blocked up with snow ; but that less had fallen near Gabas, and that consequently, the passes in that direction were practicable. Thither then we directed our steps the next morning, having procured a guide amongst the shepherds, who agreed to conduct us as far as Laruns, though he often looked at the sky, which had by this time become covered with heavy leaden-looking clouds, and shook his head saying, that we must make all speed. There was but little good augury in his looks, and less in the prospect around us ; for, as we began to ascend, the whole scene appeared covered with the cold robe of winter. All the higher parts of the mountains showed but one mass of snow, and every precipice under which we passed

seemed crowned with an impending avalanche, which nothing but the black limbs of the gigantic pines, in which that region abounds, held from an instantaneous descent upon our heads.

No frost, however, had yet reached the bottom of the ravines through which we travelled. The path was rather damp and slippery, and the stream rushed on over the rocks without showing one icicle to mark the reign of winter. Father Francis's mule, which had delayed us on our former journey, now proved more sure-footed, at least than either of the horses, and the good priest, finding himself quite secure and at his ease, dilated on the grandeur of the scenery and the magnificence of Nature, even in her rudest forms.

"I am nothing of a misanthrope," said he, "and yet, I find in the contemplation of the works of God, a charm that man and all his arts can never communicate. When I look upon the mighty efforts of creation, I feel them to be all true and genuine—all unchangeable—the effect of universal Beneficence acting with Almighty power: but when I consider even

the greatest and most splendid deeds of mankind, I am never certain in what base motives they originated, or for what bad ends they were designed; how much pain and injustice their execution may have cost, or how much misery and vice may attend upon their consequences. In all man does there is that germ from which evil may ever spring, while the works of God are always beautiful in themselves, and excellent in their purpose."

"And yet, my good Father," said I, willing enough to shorten the tedious way with conversation, "though you pronounce the flash of glory to be but a misleading meteor, and power a dangerous precipice, and love a volcano as full of earthquakes as fertility, yet still there are some things amongst men's deeds, which even you can contemplate with delight and admiration,—the protecting the weak, the assuaging grief, the dispensing joy, the leading unto virtue and right."

"True, Louis! true!" answered he, "and yet I know not whether my mind is saddened to-day, but though all these actions are admir-

able, how rare it is we can be certain that the motives which prompted them were good—only, I believe, when we look into our own breast; and then, if we examine steadfastly, clearly, accurately, how many faults, how many weaknesses, how many follies, how many crimes, do we not find to make us turn away our eyes from the sad prospect of the human heart! Here I can look around me, and see beauty springing from beneficence, and every thing that is magnificent proceeding from every thing that is wise. And oh! how happy, how full of joy and tranquillity is the conviction, that death itself, the worst evil which can happen to this frail body, is the work of that great Creator who made both the body and the soul, and certainly made them not in vain.”

A moment or two after, indeed, but so close upon what he said that no other observation had been made, I heard a kind of rushing noise, and looking up towards the cloud above us, which hid with a thick veil the whole tops of the mountains, I saw it agitated as if by a strong wind, while a roar, more awful than that

of thunder, made itself heard above. I knew the voice of the *lavange*, and with an instant perception, I know not how nor why, that it was rather behind than before us, I laid my hand upon Father Francis's bridle, and spurred forward like lightning. To my surprise the obstinate mule on which he was mounted, instead of resisting my effort to make it go on, put itself at once into a gallop, as if it were instinctively aware of the approaching danger. Houssaye and the guide followed with all speed ; and, in a moment after, we reached a spot where the valley turning abruptly to the left afforded a certain shelter.

Here I turned to look, and never shall I forget the scene that I witnessed. Thundering down the side of the hill, rushing, and roaring, and devastating in its course, came an immense shapeless mass of a dim hue, raising a sort of misty atmosphere round itself as it fell. The mountain, even to where we stood, shook under its descent ; the valleys, and the precipices, and the caverns, echoed back the tremendous roar of its fall. Immense masses

of rock rolled down before it, impelled by the violent pressure of the air which it occasioned ; and long ere it reached them, the tall pines tottered and swayed as if writhing under the consciousness of approaching destruction, till at length it touched them, when one after another fell crashing and uprooted into its tremendous mass, and were hurled along with it down the side of the steep.

Down, down it rushed, dazzling the eye and deafening the ear, and sweeping all before it, till striking the bottom of the valley with a sound as if a thousand cannon had been discharged at once, it blocked up the whole pass, dispersing the stream in a cloud of mist, and shaking by the mere concussion a multitude of crags and rocks down from the summit of the mountain. Long after it fell the hollow windings of the ravines prolonged its roar with many an echoing sound, dying slowly away till all again was silence, and the mist dispersing left the frowning destruction that it had caused exposed to the sight in all its full horrors.

Father Francis raised his hands to Heaven,

and though I am sure that few men were better prepared to leave this earth, and had less of man's lingering desire still to remain upon it, yet with that instinctive love of life, which neither religion nor philosophy can wholly banish, he thanked God most fervently for our preservation from the fate which had just passed us by. We had, indeed, many reasons to be thankful, not only for our escape from the immediate danger of the *lavange*, but also for having been enabled to accomplish our passage before its fall had blocked up the path along which we were proceeding. The guide indeed seemed little disposed to prophesy good, even from what we had escaped. The Avalanches, he said, were very uncommon at that season of the year, and when they did happen, they were always indicative of some great commotion likely to take place in the atmosphere. Neither did he love, he proceeded to say, those heavy clouds that rested half way down the sides of the mountains, nor the dead stillness of the air; both of which seemed to him to forebode a snow storm, the most certain

agent of the traveller's destruction in the winter.

Nothing remained, however, but to urge our course forward as fast as possible ; but the mule of the good Priest had now resumed her hereditary obstinacy, and neither blows nor fair words would induce her to move one step faster than suited her immediate convenience ; so that it bade fair to be near midnight before we could reach the first town in the valley *D'Osseau*.

After many a vain attempt upon the impassible animal, we were obliged to yield and proceed onward as slowly as she chose, while occasionally a sort of low howling noise in the gorges of the mountain, gave notice that the apprehensions of the guide were likely to be verified. A large eagle too, kept sailing slowly before us, breaking with its ill-omened voice, as it flitted down the ravine, the profound death-like silence of the air. Over the whole of the scene there was a dark inexpressible gloom, which found its way heavily to our own hearts. All was still too and noiseless, except the dull

melancholy sounds I have mentioned : it seemed as if Nature had become dumb with awe at the approaching tempest. No bird enlivened the air with its song, no insect interrupted the stillness with its hum, no object of life presented itself, except a hawk or a raven, shooting quickly across, evidently not in pursuit of prey, but in search of shelter. The hills and rocks were all cold and grey, except where the snow had lodged in large white masses, which rendered their aspect still more cheerless, and desolate. The sky was dark, heavy, and frowning; and every object seemed benumbed by the hand of death; so that it was impossible, on looking around upon that sad, chill, powerless scene, to fancy it could ever re-awaken into life and sunshine and summer.

Gradually the howling of the mountains increased,¹ and the wind began to break upon us with quick sharp gusts, that almost threw us from our horses, while a shower of small fine sleet drove in our faces, fatiguing and teasing us, as well as impeding our progress. The guide began now to grumble loudly at the

slowness of Father Francis' mule, and to declare that he would not stay and risk his life for any mule in France or Arragon.

We were now upon the French side of the mountains, and, as the road was sufficiently defined, I doubted not that we should be able to find our way without his assistance. As his insolence became louder, therefore, I told him, if he were a coward and afraid to stay by those persons he had undertaken to guide, to spur on his horse and deliver us from his tongue as speedily as possible. He took me at my word, replying that he was no coward, but that having his wife and children to provide for, his life was of value; that if we would go faster, he would stay with us and guide us on; but that if we would not, the path was straight before us, and that we had nothing to do but follow it by the side of the stream till it led us to a town. Seeing him thus determined, I thought it better to send forward Houssaye along with him, giving him directions to return with some people of the country, to lead us right if we should have

missed our way, and to relieve us in case we should be overwhelmed by the snow. Hous-saye still smacked too much of the old soldier to say a word in opposition to a received order; and though he looked very much as if he would have willingly stayed with Father Francis and myself, yet he instantly obeyed, and putting spurs to his horse, followed the guide on towards Laruns.

The storm every moment began to increase, and so sharp was the wind in our faces, that we could hardly distinguish our way, being nearly blinded with snow, mingled with a sort of extremely fine hail. The atmosphere also, loaded with these particles, was now so dim and obscure, that it was not possible to see more than fifty yards before us; and, while wandering on through the semi-opaque air, the objects around appeared to assume a thousand strange and fantastic shapes, of giants, and towers, and castles, as their indistinct forms were changed by the hand of fancy. Even to the animals that bore us, these transformations seemed to be visible, for more than once my horse started from a rock

which had taken the shape of some beast ; and once we were nearly half an hour in getting the mule past an old pine, which the tempest had hurled down the mountain, and which, leaning over a mass of stone, looked like an immense serpent, stretching out its neck to devour whatever living thing should pass before it.

In the mean while the ground gradually became thickly covered with snow, and every footfall of the horse left a deep mark, telling plainly how rapidly the accumulation was going on. Still we made but little progress, and, what between slipping and climbing, both the mule and the horse soon lost their vigour with fatigue, and we had now much difficulty to make them proceed.

Not long after the guide left us, it evidently began to grow dark ; and it was with feelings I have seldom felt, that I observed the gathering gloom which grew around. The white glare of the snow did indeed afford some light, but so confused and indistinct, that it served to dazzle, but not to guide.

All vestige of a path was soon effaced, and

the only means of ascertaining in which way our road lay, was by the murmuring of the stream that still continued to rush on at the bottom of the precipice over which we passed. Even the black patches which had been left, where some large stone or salient crag had sheltered any spot from the drift, were soon lost; and it became evident that much more snow had fallen on the French side of the mountains, even before that day, than we had been led to expect.

Our farther progress became at every step more and more perilous, for none of the crevices and gaps in the path were now visible, and the tormenting dashing of the snow in our eyes, and in those of our beasts, prevented us or them from choosing even those parts which appeared most solid and secure. I had hitherto led the way, but Father Francis now insisted upon going first, on account of the sure-footed nature of the mule, whose instinctive perception of every dangerous step was certain to secure him, he observed, from perils of that nature. The mule might also, he continued, in some

degree serve to guide my horse, who had more than once stumbled upon the slippery and uneven rocks, concealed as they were by the snow.

After some opposition, I consented to his doing so, feeling a sort of depression of mind, which I can only attribute to fatigue. It was not fear : but there was a sort of deep despondency grew upon me, which made me give up all hope of ever disentangling ourselves from the dangerous situation in which we were placed. The cold, the darkness, the chilly, piercing wind, the void, yawning expanse of the dim hollow before me, the melancholy howling of the mountains, the rush and the tumult of the swelling stream below, the whispering murmur of the pine-woods above, beginning with a gentle sigh, and growing hoarser and hoarser till it ended in a roar like the angry billows of the ocean, all affected my mind with dark and gloomy presentiments ;—I never hoped to save my life from the rude hand of the tempest, I hardly know whether I wished it ; despair had obtained so firm a

hold of my mind, that it had scarcely power even to wish.

After we had changed the order of our progression, however, we went on for some time much more securely, the mule stepping on with a quiet caution and certainty, peculiar to those animals, and my horse following it step by step, as if perfectly well understanding her superiority in such circumstances, and allowing her to lead without one feeling of jealousy.

Still the snow fell, and the wind blew, and the irritating howling and roaring of the mountains continued with increasing violence. while the blank darkness of the night surrounded us on all sides; when suddenly the mule stopped, and showed an evident determination of proceeding no farther. Fearful lest there should be any hidden danger which she did not choose to pass, I dismounted as carefully from my horse as I could, and proceeding round the spot where she stood, I went on a few paces, trying the ground at each step I took; but all was firm and even, indeed much more smooth than any we had hitherto

passed. The path, it is true, ran along on the verge of the precipice, but there wanted no room for two or three horses to have advanced abreast ; and consequently, seeing that the beast was actuated by a fit of obstinacy, I mounted again, and proceeded to ride round for the purpose of leading the way, to try whether she would not then follow. Accordingly, I spurred on my horse, but he had scarcely taken two steps forward, when the vicious mule struck out with her hind feet full in his chest. He reared—plunged—reared again, and in a moment I found his haunches slipping over the precipice behind. It was the work of a moment ; but, with the overpowering instinct of self-preservation, I let go the bridle, sprang forward from his back, and catching hold of the rhododendrons and other tough shrubs on the brink, found myself hanging in the air with my feet just beating against the face of the rock. My brain turned giddy, and an agonizing cry, something between a neigh and a scream, from the depth below, told me dreadfully the fate which I had just escaped.

Slowly, and cautiously, fearing every moment that the slender twigs by which I held would give way, and precipitate me down into the horrid abyss that had received my poor horse, I contrived to raise myself till I stood once more upon firm ground ; and then replied to the anxious calls of Father Francis, who had dimly seen the horse plunge over, and had heard his cry from below, but knew not whether I had fallen with him or not.

My heart still beat too fast, and my brain turned round too much, to permit of our proceeding for some minutes ; the loss of my horse, also, was likely to prove a serious addition, if not to our danger, at least to my fatigues. Nothing, however, could be done to remedy the misfortune, and after pausing for a while, in order to gain breath, we attempted to recommence our journey. For the purpose of leading her on, I laid my hand upon the mule's bridle ; but nothing would make her move ; and the moment I tried to pull her forward, or Father Francis touched her with the whip, she ran back towards the edge of the précipice, till another

step would have plunged her over. Nothing now remained but for the good Priest to descend and take his journey forward also on foot. As soon as he was safely off the back of the vicious beast which had caused us so much uncomfört and danger, I again attempted to make her proceed ; resolving, in the height of my anger, if she again approached the side, rather to push her over than save her ; but with cunning equal to her obstinacy, she perceived that we should not entertain the same fear as when her rider was upon her back, and instead of pulling backwards as before, she calmly laid herself down on her side, leaving us no resource but to go forward without her.

The most painful part of our journey now began. Every step was dangerous, every step was difficult ; nothing but horror and gloom surrounded us on all sides, and death lay around us in a thousand unknown shapes. Wherever we ascended, we had to struggle with the full force of the overpowering blast, and wherever the path verged into a descent, there we had slowly to choose our way with re-

doubled caution ; with a road so slippery, that it was hardly possible to keep one's feet, and a profound precipice below ; while the wind tore us in its fury, and the snow and sleet beat upon us without ceasing. For nearly an hour we continued to bear up against it, struggling onward with increasing difficulties, sometimes falling, sometimes dashed back by the wind, with our clothes drenched in consequence of the snow melting upon us, and the cold of the atmosphere growing more intense as every minute of the night advanced. At length hope itself was wearied out ; and at a spot where the ravine opened out into a valley to the right and left, while our path continued over a sort of causeway, with the river on one hand, and a deep dell filled up with snow on the other, Father Francis, who had hitherto struggled on with more vigour than might have been expected from his age, suddenly stopped, and resting on a rock, declared his incapacity to go any farther. “ My days are over, Louis,” said he ; “ leave me, and go forward as fast as you can. If I mistake not, that is the pass just

above Laruns. Speed on, speed on, my dear boy ; a quarter of an hour, I know, would put us in safety, but I have not strength to sustain myself any longer : I have done my utmost, and I must stop."

He spoke so feebly, that the very tone of his voice left me no hope that he would be able to proceed, especially across that open part of the valley, where we were exposed to the full force of the wind. The snow already dashed against us with more tremendous gusts than we had yet felt, whirling the snow into thick columns that threatened every moment to overwhelm us, and I doubted not that the path beyond lay still more open to its fury. To leave the good old man in that situation, was of course what I never dreamed of ; and consequently I expressed my own determination to wait there also for the return of Houssaye, who, I deemed, could not be long in coming to search for us.

" No, Louis, no !" cried Father Francis, " the wind, the snow, the cold, are all increasing. You must attempt to go on, for, if you do not, you will perish also. But first listen to an

important piece of information which has been confided to me. As I cannot bear the message myself, you must deliver it to your mother — Tell her——”

I could hardly hear what he said, his voice was so faint and the howling of the storm so dreadful; and before he had concluded, a gust of wind more violent than any we had hitherto encountered whirled round us both with irresistible power. I strove to hold by the rock with all my force, but in vain. I was torn from it as if I had been a straw, and the next moment was dashed with the good priest into the midst of the snow that had collected in the dell below. We sunk deep down into the yielding drift, which, rising high above our heads, for a moment nearly suffocated me. Soon, however, I found that I could breathe, and though all hope was now over, I contrived to remove the snow that lay between myself and Father Francis, of whose gown I had still retained a hold. I told him I was safe, and called to him to answer me. He made no reply — I raised his head — he moved not — I put my hand upon his heart — it had ceased to beat !

CHAPTER XII.

I HAVE told all that I remember of that night,—a night whose horrible events still haunt my memory like the ghosts of the unburied on the banks of Styx, often flitting across my mind's eye when it would fain turn to scenes of happiness and joy. If ever a horrible dream disturbs my slumber, it is also sure to refer to that night, and I find myself labouring on in the midst of wilds and darkness, rocks and precipices, the tempest dashing in my face, and the wind hurling me into the midst of the suffocating snow.

My recovery from the sort of stupor in which I had fallen, after I had discovered the death of poor Father Francis, was very differ-

ent in all its sensations from my resuscitation after drowning. I remember nothing of the actual return to life, and it must indeed have been some weeks before I regained my powers of reason and perception in their full force, passing the interval in a state of delirium, brought on by the cold, and also perhaps by the excessive excitement in which I had been for some hours previous to my losing my recollection.

When I first woke, as it were, from this state of mental alienation, I found myself lying on a bed, stretched in my mother's toilet chamber. I believe I had been asleep, and felt excessively enfeebled—so much so indeed, that, though I plainly saw my mother just rising from beside me, I could not summon sufficient energy to speak to her, and I re-closed my eyes. I heard her say, however, “He wakes! try, dear Helen, to soothe him to sleep again, while I go and endeavour to rest myself, for I am very much worn with watching last night.” Her steps retreated, for she fancied me still delirious; and I could hear some one else glide forward—though the footfall was per-

haps the lightest that ever touched the earth—and take the seat my mother had left. So acute had become my sense of hearing, that the least sound was perceptible to my ears, even for many weeks afterwards, to such a degree as to be positively painful to me.

I was well aware that it was Helen Arnault—my beloved Helen that sat beside me, and yet, though I can scarcely say my senses were sufficiently restored for me positively to exercise that faculty which is called *thinking*, there was upon my mind a vague dreamy remembrance that I had acted wrong in her regard, which made me still keep my eyes closed, trying to call up more clearly the images of all my adventures at Saragossa. As I lay thus, I felt a soft sweet breath fan my cheek, like the air of Spring, and then a warm drop or two fall upon it, like a spring shower. I opened my eyes, and saw Helen gazing upon me and weeping. She raised her head slightly, for her lips had been close to my cheek, but thinking, that my mind was still in the same wandering state, she continued to gaze upon my face, and I could

see in her eyes the look of that deep, devoted, resolute affection, with which woman is pre-eminently endowed—her blessing or her curse ! I laid my hand gently upon one of hers which rested on the side of my bed, and drawing it towards me, I pressed it to my lips. She instantly started up, and looked at me with a glance of surprise and joy that I can see even now.

“ Oh, is it possible ! ” cried she ; “ are you better really ? ” and she seemed as if about to start away to convey the tidings to my mother ; but I beckoned her to bend her head down towards me, and when she had done so, I thanked her, in a low voice, but with energetic words, for her care, her kindness, and for her love. Her blushing cheek was close to my lips, but sickness, which had rendered all my sensations morbidly acute, had also made my feelings of delicacy much more refined, and had given a degree of timidity I did not often otherwise feel. I would not for the world have taken advantage of the opportunity which her kindness and confidence afforded ; and though, as I

have said, her cheek, looking like the summer side of a blooming peach, was within the reach of my lips, I let her raise it without a touch, when I had poured forth my thanks into her ear ; and suffered her to do her joyful errand to my mother, only venturing to tell her, ere she went, how much I loved, and how much I would love her to the end of my existence.

A moment after, my mother returned herself, her eyes streaming with tears of joy, and, kneeling by my bedside, she covered my cheek with those fond maternal kisses, whose unmixed purity gives them a sweet and holy balm, which love with all its fire and brightness can seldom, seldom attain.

My convalescence was tedious, and months elapsed before I regained any thing like the robust health which I had formerly enjoyed. Months of sickness are very apt to make a spoilt child, and had I not lately received some lessons hard to be forgot, such might have been the case with me, when I saw the whole happiness of the three persons I myself loved best, depending upon my slightest

change of looks. My father's delight at my recovery was not less than my mother's; and every day that I met Helen, I could see her eye rest for an instant upon my face, as if to watch what progress returning health had made since the day before; and when, by chance, it had gained a deeper touch of red, or my eyes had acquired a ray of renewed fire, the happiness of her heart raised the blood into her cheek, and made her look a thousand times lovelier than ever.

We now also met oftener than formerly. The ties which she had entwined round my mother's heart had been, during my illness, drawn more tightly than ever. That restraint no longer existed which had formerly proved so irksome to me; Helen was in every way treated as a child of the family; and, had she chosen it, might have yielded me many an hour of that private conversation which I was not remiss in seeking. But far from it; with an ingenuity, which mingled gentleness, perhaps even affection, with reserve, she avoided all opportunity of hearing what her heart for-

bade her to reprove, and to which she yet felt it wrong to listen.

When before my father or mother, instead of appearing to feel a greater degree of timidity, it seemed as if the restraint was removed, and she would behave towards me as a gentle and affectionate sister; but if ever she encountered me alone, she had still some excuse to leave me, ere I could tell her all that was passing in my heart, or win from her any reiteration of her once acknowledged regard.

Her conduct made me grave and melancholy. My bosom was full of a passion that I burned to pour forth with all the ardour of youth, and it drove me forth to solitude to dream over the feelings I was denied the power to communicate. My father observed my long and lonely ramblings; and remonstrated with me on giving way to such melancholy gloom, when I had so many causes for happiness and for gratitude to Heaven. "Not," said he, "that I condemn an occasional recourse to the commune of one's own thoughts; it enlarges, it elevates, it improves the mind; and I am convinced that

the beautiful Roman fable of Numa and Egeria was but a fine allegory, to express that the Roman king learned wisdom by a frequent intercourse with the divine and instructive spirit of solitude. But your retirement, my dear Louis, seems to me of a gloomy and dissatisfied nature ; perhaps it originates in a desire to see more of courts and cities than you have hitherto done. If so, it is easy to gratify you, however painful it may be to your mother and myself to lose your society."

In reply, I assured him that I entertained no desire of the kind ; but he had persuaded himself that such was the case, and still retained his first opinion, though God knows to leave Helen was the last thing I sought. He continued, however, to turn in his own mind his project of sending me to the court, notwithstanding which, it is probable that the whole would have gradually passed away from his memory, had not my mother, to whom he had communicated his wishes, from other motives determined upon the same proceeding : and with her calm but active spirit, while my father spoke of it every day, yet took no

step towards its accomplishment, she hardly mentioned the subject, but carried it into effect.

As I recovered my health, there was of course much to hear concerning all that had occurred, both during my absence in Spain, and my illness after my return.

In regard to the first, I shall merely notice the circumstance which occasioned my father to recall me ; this was nothing else than a visit from the Marquis de St. Brie, of whom the Chevalier had instilled into our minds so unfavourable an opinion.

On his presenting himself at the Chateau, my father received him coldly and haughtily ; but the Marquis soon, by the polished elegance of his manners, and the apparent frankness of his character, did away the evil impression which had been created against him. He spoke of his rencontre with me, and he praised my conduct in the highest manner. Courage, and skill, and generous forbearance, were all attributed to me ; and the ears of the parent were easily soothed by the commendation bestowed upon his child. Besides, my father was too

lazy to hold his opinion steadfastly, when any one strove to steal it from him; and he gradually brought himself to believe that the Marquis de St. Brie was a very much slandered person, and that, so far from having any evil intent towards me, the Marquis was my very good friend and well-wisher.

My mother was slower to be convinced, but the language of my former adversary was so high whenever he spoke of me, that she also gradually yielded her unfavourable impressions, and willingly consented to my recall—the Marquis having promised to re-visit the Chateau de L'Orme in the spring, and expressed a wish to see me, offering at the same time, if his interest could be of service to my views, to use it to the utmost in my behalf. My mother looked upon this, at the worst, as an empty profession, and my father almost believed him to be sincere.

Thus I was recalled; and my adventures on my return being already told, I have only farther to relate the means by which I was saved from the fate that menaced me. Immediately

on quitting Father Francis and myself, my faithful Houssaye had ridden on with the guide to Laruns, as hard as he could. The wind, however, and the snow had delayed them far longer than he had anticipated; and, anxious for my safety, he galloped to the little cabaret in search of some one to return and lend their assistance in finding me out, and rescuing me from the peril in which he had left me.

The first persons whom he encountered in the auberge, were Arnault, the Procureur of Lourdes, and his son, the latter of whom instantly proffered to join the party, and aid with all his heart. But the old Procureur was thereupon immediately smitten with a fit of paternal tenderness, such as had not visited him for many years before; and he not only positively prohibited Jean Baptiste from encountering the dangers of the snow himself, but he also pronounced such a pathetic oration upon the horrors and dangers of the undertaking, that of the whole party collected in the cabaret, not one could be found to venture.

Houssaye's next resource was amongst the

cottagers round about, and, by promises and persuasion, he induced eight sturdy mountaineers to accompany him with the resin torches for which they are famous in that part of the country, and which are almost as difficult to extinguish as the celebrated fire of Callinicus, with which they began their search on the road towards Gabas; but scarcely had they passed the defile immediately above Laruns, than the light of the torches flashed over a spot where the snow had evidently been disturbed, and on examining they found a part of my clothes not yet covered with the drift which had come down since the wind had swept Father Francis and myself from the path. We were soon extricated, and carried to Laruns apparently dead.

Here all means were applied to recall us to life, but they proved successful only with me; on Father Francis they had no effect, though Houssaye assured me that every thing which could be devised was employed in vain.

Amongst the most active in rendering me every assistance after I was extricated was the good youth who had saved me before from a

watery grave ; but in the midst of his endeavours, his father checked him, and calling him on one side, spoke to him for long in a low voice.

“ The old fox thought I could hear nothing,” said Houssaye ; “ but enough reached me to make me understand he would rather have had you die than live. If he dies, I heard him say, you shall have both—something which I did not hear—and all the property ; but if he lives, mark if he do not thwart us, though I will take care to throw obstacles enough in his way ! The lad seemed well enough inclined to help you still,” proceeded Houssaye, “ but his father would not let him, though he came the next morning himself, fawning and asking if he could bear any message back to Lourdes, whither he was about to return, finding that he could not pass into Spain as he had intended.”

This latter part of the worthy old trumpeter's narration astonished and embarrassed me a good deal ; and after turning it in every way that my imagination could suggest, without being

able to discover any solution of the mystery, I was obliged to conclude, that in what the narrator declared he had overheard, fancy had full as great a share as matter-of-fact. Arnault might dislike me—indeed I was very sure that he did so, but how my life might thwart his views, or my death might profit him, I was at a loss to discover.

One thing, however, I remarked ; Arnault, after my recovery, came more than once to see his daughter, which he had not done more than twice before, since she had been at the Chateau. Her brother also was more frequently with her, and on these occasions the father, if he met any member of my family, was humble and fawning, the son awkward and sheepish ; and it struck me that the behaviour of the latter was very much changed towards myself, as if he were playing a part learned by rote, which neither assimilated with his character nor suited his inclination.

I also perceived a change take place in Helen. She grew silent, pale, thoughtful. When she looked at me it seemed as if her

eyes would overflow with tears, were it not for the restraint imposed upon her by the presence of others. Her gaiety was gone ; and even the servants, amongst whom she was almost adored, began to remark the sadness of *Mademoiselle Helene*, and comment on its cause. All this was to me a mystery ; and doubt of any kind, even concerning a trifle, has ever been, to me, a thousand times more painful than evident danger or real misfortune. Doubt is to my mind what the darkness of night is to a ghost-frightened school-boy — I go on gazing anxiously about me on every side, conjuring up a thousand ideal spectres, and distorting every dim object that I see into the likeness of some fearful phantom of the imagination ; nor can all the reasoning in my power divest my mind of the credulity with which I listen either to hope or to apprehension : though I well know that apprehension is to sorrow what hope is to joy — a sort of *avant courier*, who greatly magnifies the importance of the personage whom he precedes.

In the present instance, I determined to

change my doubts to certainties, if human ingenuity might do so. Probably I should have accomplished it, but passion—which generally interferes with the best laid schemes of human wisdom, suggesting that the gratification which the heart seeks may easily be blended with the designs which the brain has formed—was ingenious enough to persuade me that the very best thing I could do for the accomplishment of my object was suddenly to explain myself with Helen. She avoided giving me any opportunity of doing so. I persisted with all the ardour of my nature, watching with unwearied assiduity even to gain a quarter of an hour ; but I watched in vain.

Thus lapsed first a week, and then another, at the end of which the Marquis de St. Brie arrived at the Chateau, full ten days before he had been expected. He came, however, with no train which could incommode his host and hostess. Two servants were all that accompanied him ; and the seeming frankness of this conduct even won much upon my opinion. I found him a different person from what I had conceived. He

was proud, perhaps, in manner, but not haughtiness; he was witty, he was well informed, he was pleasing. In short, he was the opposite to that Marquis de St. Brie whom I had more than once regretted not having sent to his long account at the time it was in my power to do so.

Was he changed—or was I? Perhaps both—and I am afraid that a degree of pique towards the Chevalier did certainly make me easily receive every favourable impression that the manners and appearance of my former adversary were calculated to produce. In latter years I have tried to judge my own motives in the various events of life—I have judged them strictly—as strictly as it is possible for a man to do; but not too much so, for it is impossible that any one can be too severe upon himself. The result of my self-investigation on this point has been, that had my friendship for the Chevalier been as lively as ever, I should have found less charms in the society of the Marquis de St. Brie.

CHAPTER XIII.

BY a long system of exact economy, my mother had, by this time, repaired, in some degree, the ravages which many generations of extravagance had committed on our family estates; and though the pimple-nosed *maître d'hotel* and old Houssaye, with two other septuagenarian lackeys, who might be considered as heir-looms in the family, still maintained their faces in the hall, yet four other more youthful attendants had been added to the number; and on the first day of the Marquis de St. Bric's arrival all eight figured in new bright liveries of green and gold, with well-starched ruffs, and white sword scabbards. This was an expansion of liberality on the part

of my mother which I had not expected ; not that for a moment I mean to insinuate that the spirit of frugality was in her the effect of a sordid heart—far, far from it. It was an effort of her mind, and had ever been a painful one. She had herself experienced all the un comforts of that miserable combination, a great name and an inferior fortune, and she was resolved, if possible, to save her son from the same distresses.

In the present instance she was actuated by a feeling of that refined delicacy towards her husband, which ever taught her not only to respect him herself, but to throw a veil even round his foibles, for the purpose of hiding them from the eyes of others. She had heard my father calmly talk to the Marquis de St. Brie, on the former visit, of his retinue, and his vassals ; and a slight smile had played about the guest's lip, which my father never saw, but which wounded my mother for him. She instantly determined to sacrifice some part of her system of economy, without attempting any vain display, or going beyond what she could reasonably afford ; and

the present effect was that which I have described.

We dined in general a little after noon, but on the day of the Marquis's arrival, which was looked upon by the servants as one of those occasions of ceremony, when their rights and privileges were to be as strictly enforced as the official tenures at a royal coronation; the announcement of dinner was somewhat delayed by a contest between Houssaye and the *maître d'hôtel*, in regard to which should sound the trumpet. Houssaye grounded his claim upon patent of office, as the trumpeter-general to the Counts of Bigorre; and the *maître d'hôtel* contended for the honour as a right-prescriptive, which he had exercised for thirty years. The *maître d'hôtel* would certainly have carried the day, being in possession of the brazen tube in dispute; but Houssaye, like a true old soldier, hung upon his flanks, embarrassed his manœuvres, and at length defeated him by a *coup-de-main*. The *maître d'hôtel*, having possession, as I have said, resolved to exercise his right; and, at the hour appointed, raised the

trumpet to his lips and prepared an energetic breath. His red cheeks swelled till they looked like a ripe pomegranate; his eyes stared as if they would start from their sockets; his long, pimpled nose was nearly eclipsed by its rubicund neighbours, the cheeks, and would hardly have been seen but for a vibratory sort of movement about the end, produced, probably, by the compression of his breath. All announced a most terrible explosion, when suddenly the undaunted Houssaye stepped up, and applying his thumb to the cheek of this unhappy aspirant to *tubicinal* honours, expelled the breath before the lips were prepared. The cheeks sunk, the eyes relapsed, the nose protruded, and a hollow murmur died along the resonant cavities of the brass—a sort of dirge to the pseudo-trumpeter's defeat.

The whole scene was visible to me through the open door of the vestibule, and so irresistibly comic was it altogether, that I could not refrain from staying to witness its termination. Again the *maître d'hôtel* essayed the feat, and again the malicious Houssaye rendered his

efforts abortive ; upon which the discomfited party declared he would carry his cause before a higher tribunal, and was proceeding towards my father's apartments to state his grievances. But he committed one momentous oversight which completed his defeat.

In the agitation of the moment he laid the trumpet down ; Houssaye pounced upon it like lightning, started upon a chair, and applied the brass to his lips. The *maître d'hôtel* threw his arms round him to pull him down, but Houssaye's weight overbalanced his adversary, and both rolled upon the floor together.

The old trumpeter, however, had blown many an inspiring blast on horseback and on foot, in the charge, in the retreat, in the camp, or in the rage of the battle ; all situations were alike to him, and as he rolled over and over with the *maître d'hôtel*, he still kept the trumpet to his lips, and blew, and blew, and blew, till such a call to the standard echoed through the chateau, as had never before disturbed its peaceful halls.

After I had seen the conclusion of this

doughty contention, I was proceeding towards my father's library, when I was met in the corridor by the whole party coming from their various apartments. My father resigned to no one the honour of handing down the Countess, and the Marquis turned to offer his hand to Helen, who followed her, giving a slight sort of start as his eye fell upon so much loveliness.

“ I did not know, Madam,” said he, “ that you had so fair a daughter.”

“ She is no farther my daughter,” replied the Countess, looking back to Helen with a smile, “ than in being the daughter of my love. Mademoiselle Arnault, Monsieur le Marquis de St. Brie !”

The hall, as we entered it, looked more splendid than ever I had seen it. With infinite labour, the old banners, that flaunted in the air above the table, had been cleared of their antique dust ; all our family plate was displayed upon the buffet ; and the eight liveried lackeys, in their new suits, gave an air of feudal state to the hall, that it had not possessed since the days of Henry Quatre.

During the first service, but little was said by any one. After the grave employment of half an hour, however, the mind would fain have its share of activity; and, though somewhat impeded by the gross aliments of the body, found means to issue forth and mingle with the banquet.

“The bird of Juno,” said the Marquis, pointing to a peacock that, with its spread tail and elevated crest, ornamented the centre of the table, “is a fitting dish in such a proud hall as this. I love to dine in a vast and antique room, with every haughty accessory that can give solemnity to the repast.”

“And is it,” demanded my father, with a smile, “from a conviction of the importance, or the littleness of the employment?”

“Oh, of its meanness, certainly!” replied the Marquis; “it needs, I think, all the ingenuity of man’s pride—all that he can collect of grand or striking, associated with himself, to soothe his vanity under the weight of his weaknesses and necessities; and what can be more pain-

fully degrading than this propensity to devour?"

"It is a philosophy I can hardly admit," replied my father; "the simple act of eating is surely not degrading, and, when employed but as the means of support, it becomes dignified by the great objects to which it tends—the preservation of life, the invigorating the body, and, consequently, the liberation of the mind from all those oppressive chains, with which corporeal weakness or ill-health is sure to enthrall it. In my eyes, every thing that Nature has given, or taught, is beautiful; and never becomes degrading but by the corruption with which it is mingled by man himself."

"I know not," answered the Marquis, smiling at the enthusiasm with which my father sustained what was one of his most favourite theses, "but I can conceive no dignity in eating the mangled limbs of other animals slaughtered for our use."

"You look not so cynically, I hope, on all other failings of humanity?" demanded my mo-

ther, willing to change the subject : and, changing it to one on which every Frenchwoman thinks or has thought a great deal, she added, “ Love, for instance ? ”

The Marquis bowed. “ No one can be more devoted,” replied he, “ to the lovelier part of the creation than I am, and yet I cannot but think that the ancients did well to represent Venus as springing from the foam of the sea.”

“ Somewhat light, you would say, in her nature,” rejoined my father, “ and variable as her parent waves —— ”

“ And sometimes as cold and as uncertain too,” said I ; but, as I did so, I saw a slight flush pass over Helen’s brow, and I added, “ But you forget, Monsieur le Marquis, or rather, like a skilful arguer, you do not notice, that the blood of Cœlus, which we translate, almost literally, a drop from heaven, was mingled with the foam of the sea to produce the goddess.”

“ Happily turned ! ” replied the Marquis with a smile ; “ but I trust, my young friend, you are aware that the Queen of Love is only to be won by the god of arms, as our sweet and tumid

Raccan would put it. Have you yet entered the path in which you are born to distinguish yourself; I mean the service of your King?"

With somewhat of a blush, I replied that I had not, and the Marquis proceeded. "Fie, now! 'tis a shame that a sword, which I know, to my cost, is a good one, should rust in its scabbard. Every gentleman, whatever may be his ultimate objects in life, should serve his country for at least one campaign. It is rumoured that our wars in Italy will infallibly be renewed: in that case, I shall of course take the command of my regiment, and if your noble father will allow you to accompany me, we will turn the two good swords, that once crossed upon a foolish quarrel, against the enemies of our king and our country."

Without a moment's hesitation I should have accepted the proposal; but my mother interposed. "I have already," said she, after having expressed her thanks to the Marquis for the honour he proposed to her son—"I have already written to her Highness the Countess de Soissons, who honoured me in my youth with her

favour and affection, soliciting, if it be possible, that Louis may, for a short period, enjoy the advantage of being near Monsieur le Comte, her son. I have no doubt that she will comply with my request; and, at all events, we must, of course, suspend every other plan till her Highness's answer is received."

The Marquis appeared somewhat mortified, but immediately changed the conversation to other subjects, and certainly, no man I ever met could render himself more fascinating when he chose to do so. His language was as elegant as his manners, and he mingled, with a playful, shining, unforced wit, a slight degree of cynical bitterness, which rendered it more exciting by its pungency. He had the great art too, of suiting his conversation exactly to those with whom he conversed; not precisely as the camelion, taking its hue from the object next to it, but rather like a fine piece of polished china, receiving a sufficient reflection from whatever salient colour was placed near, without losing the original figures with which it was itself marked. Thus he never lost in manner a certain degree of

pride, which was the great master-passion of his soul, but when he wished to please or win, he made even this pride subservient to his purpose, by acting as an opposition to his courtesy and condescension. Nor did he ever in the fits of that cynical humour, which he either affected or possessed from nature, go beyond the exact point at which it could amuse or stimulate those that listened to him; and he calculated with wonderful insight into their characters, the precise portions that each could bear or relish.

With whatever feelings one entered his society, one quitted it struck and fascinated. I did so myself, notwithstanding the warning I had received with regard to him—notwithstanding a strong prepossession against him. I felt attracted, amused, and pleased; and every minute that I passed in his company, I had to recall the demoniacal passions his countenance had expressed at Estelle, and ask myself, can this be the same man? It *was*; and when closely observed, there was a glance of malignity in the eye, which if rightly read, would have told that there the real man shone out, and that the rest

was all a mask. The nations of the East have a superstition, that their *Dives*, *Afrits*, and other evil spirits, have the power of transforming themselves into the most beautiful and enticing shapes ; but that some one spot of their body is always exempt from this change, and remains in its original hideousness. Thus I believe it is with the human character ; give it what gracious form you will, there is still some original feature will rest unchanged, to show what shape it had at first received from nature.

The Marquis de St. Brie, however, maintained the doubtful favour he had gained with the inhabitants of the Chatcau de L'Orme as long as he remained within its walls, which was during the space of three days. Each passed much like the former, with the exception of the second, in the course of which we went out upon the mountains to shoot the izzard.

At the hour appointed for setting forth, it so happened that I was a moment later than my Father and the Marquis. My mother too, was in the court seeing the preparations for our departure ; when, on going from my bed-

chamber into the corridor, I was met by Helen, who instead of passing me hastily, as she usually did, paused a moment as if anxious to speak. Her cheek was rather flushed, and never did I behold her looking more lovely. The temptation to delay was not to be resisted, and besides, such a moment might never come again. "Helen!" said I, taking her hand, "Dearest Helen, I would give a world to speak with you alone, for but five minutes. You once said you loved me—you promised you would always love me—Helen, you must have seen how much I have wished for such an opportunity, and yet you have never since my return given me one moment of your private time."

"Indeed, Louis," she answered, still letting me keep her hand; "I could not then—I thought it would be wrong. Now, perhaps, I may think differently; and I will no longer avoid you as I have done. But what I sought you for now, was to say, beware of that Marquis de St. Brie. I am sure—I *feel* sure, that he is a villain. And oh, Louis, beware of him!

for your sake—for mine.” So saying, she waited for no reply, but drawing away her hand, glided back to the Countess’s apartments.

Oh, what a nicely balanced lever is the mind of youth ! a breath will depress it, or a breath will raise. For days before, I had been gloomy and desponding. Existence, and all that surrounded it, I had looked upon with a jaundiced eye, which saw only defects. I could have quarrelled with the sunbeam for ever casting a shade—the summer breeze for ever bearing a vapour on its wings ; and now I went away from Helen with a heart beating high with expectation and delight ! One kind word ; one affectionate look ; one expression of interest and love, and every cloud was banished from my mind ; and all was again sunshine, and summer, and enjoyment. My father and the Marquis had already set out, but a few steps brought me to their side ; and, speeding on towards the heights above the valley of Argelez, we separated, to beat a narrow lateral dell, while the servants spreading in a larger

circle, drove the game in towards us. My father took his range along one side of the hollow, and I on the other; while the Marquis chose a path above mine, having a view of the whole side of the hill.

For some time we met with little success, when suddenly an izzard bounded away along the path, about three hundred yards in advance. Before I could fire, it was out of shot; but springing after it, I followed eagerly along the shelf of rock, knowing that a little farther a precipice intervened, which I did not believe the animal could leap; and consequently, if it escaped me, it must run up the hill and cross the Marquis, or go down into the valley and come within my father's range. As I went on, circling round the mountain, a piece of rock jutted out across the path about thirty yards in advance, and hid the precipice from my view. The izzard I doubted not was there, hesitating on the brink, as they often do when the leap is dangerous; and hoping to obtain a shot at it before it turned, I was hurrying on, when suddenly I heard the ringing of a carbine and a

bullet whistled close to my ear. Its course must have lain within two inches of my head ; and, not a little angry, I turned, and saw the Marquis standing on a rock a little way above me.

“There ! there !” cried he, pointing with his hand ; “ There, I have missed him ! Why don't you fire ?”

At that moment I caught a sight of the izzard actually springing up the most perpendicular part of the mountain. It was almost beyond the range of my carbine, but however, I fired, and the animal rolled down dead into the valley.

Neither the Marquis nor myself alluded to the shot which he had discharged, and it remained a very great doubt in my mind, whether he had missed me or the izzard.

CHAPTER XIV.

It may seem strange, very strange, that with such suspicions on my mind, I should accept an invitation to visit the man who had excited them. Nevertheless I did, and what is perhaps still more strange, those very suspicions were in some degree a cause of my doing so.

When the Marquis first proposed that I should spend a day or two with him at his *parillon de chasse*, in the neighbourhood of Bagneres, I felt a doubt in regard to it, of which I was ashamed—I was afraid of feeling afraid of any thing, and I instantly accepted his invitation. I know not whether this may be very comprehensible to every one, but let any man remember his feelings when he was nineteen,—

an age at which we have not learned to distinguish between courage and rashness, prudence and timidity,—and he will, at least, in some degree, understand, though he may blame my having acted as I did.

I would willingly have suffered the Marquis to be a day in advance before I fulfilled my engagement, longing for that promised half hour of conversation with Helen, which was to me one of those cherished anticipations on which the heart of youth spends half its ardour. Oh, how often I wish, now-a-day, that I could long for any thing as I did in my childhood, and fill up the interval between the promise and the fulfilment with bright dreams worth a world of realities. But, alas! the uncertainty of every thing earthly, gradually teaches man to crowd the vacancy of expectation with fears instead of hopes, and to guard against disappointment instead of dreaming of enjoyment. However, as the Marquis was only to remain three days at his *pavillon* ere he set out for Paris, he insisted on my accompanying him when he left the Chateau de L'Orme.

The ride was delightful in itself, but he contrived to withdraw my attention from the scenery by the charms of his conversation. The first subject that he entered upon, was my proposed visit to the court; and he drew a thousand light yet faithful sketches of all the principal courtiers of the day.

“Amongst others,” said he, after specifying several that I now forget, “you will see the Duke of Bouillon, brave, shrewd, yet hasty, always hurrying into danger with fearless impetuosity, and then finding means of escape with a coolness which, if exerted at first, would have kept him free from peril. He puts me in mind of a rope-dancer, whose every spring seems as if it would be his last, and yet he catches himself somehow when he appears inevitably gone. In his brother, Turenne, a very different character is to be met with, or rather, perhaps, the same character without its defects. What in Bouillon is rashness, in Turenne is courage; what is cunning in the one, is wisdom in the other. I believe Turenne would sacrifice himself to his country; but if Bouillon were to erect an altar

to any deity it would be, I am afraid, to himself. Then there is the young and daring Jean de Gondi, who is striving for the archbishopric of Paris; the most talented man in Europe, but gifted or cursed with that strange lightness of soul which sports with every thing as if it were a trifle;—who would overthrow an empire but to remodel it: or raise an insurrection but to guide the wild horses that draw the chariot of tumult. Had he lived in the ancient days, he would have burnt the temple of the Ephesian goddess to build, in one Olympiad, what cost two hundred years. His mind, in short, is like the ocean, deep and profound; that plays with a feather, or supports a navy; that now is rippling in golden tranquillity, and now is raging in fury and in tumult; that now scarce shakes the pebble on the shore, and now spreads round confusion, destruction, and death. In regard to the Count de Soissons, to whom you go, his character is difficult to know, but yet I think I know it. He has many high and noble qualities, and though at present he appears intolerably proud, yet that is a fault of his education,

not of his disposition ; he has it from his mother, and will conquer it, I doubt not. But there is one virtue he wants, without which talents, and skill, and courage are nothing ; — he wants resolution. He is somewhat obstinate, but that does not imply that he is resolute ; and a man without resolution may be looked upon in the light of a miser : all the riches that Nature can give are useless to him, because he has not the courage to make use of them.”

“ You must have been a very keen observer,” said I, “ of those persons with whom you have mingled, and doubtless also of human life in general.”

“ Life,” replied he, “ as life, is very little worth considering. It is a stream that flows by us without our knowing how. Its turbulence or its tranquillity, I believe, depend little upon ourselves. If there be rain in the mountains, it will be a torrent ; if it prove a dry season, it will be a rivulet. We must let it flow as it will till it come to an end, and then we have nothing to do but die.”

“ And of death,” said I, “ have you not

thought of that? As it is the very opposite of life it may have merited some more thought."

"Less, far less!" said he; "with some trouble, we may change the course of the rivulet; but with all our efforts, we cannot alter the bounds of the sea. Look on death how we will, we can derive nothing from it. The pleasures and pains of existence are so balanced, we cannot tell whether death be a relief or a deprivation, and as to the bubble of something after death, it is somewhat emptier than that now floating down the stream."

I started and said nothing, and gradually the conversation dropped of itself. After a pause, he again turned it into other channels, speaking of pleasure, and the excesses and gratifications of a court; and though he recommended *moderation*, as the most golden word that any language possessed, yet it was upon no principle of virtue, either moral or religious. It was for the sake of pleasure alone—that it might be more durable in itself, and never counterbalanced by painful consequences.

My mind naturally turned to my many con-

versations with the Chevalier ; and, by comparison, I found his morality of a very different quality. I merely replied, however, that I believed, if people had no stronger motives to moderation than the expectation of remote effects, they would seldom put much restraint upon their passions.

Soon after we arrived at the *Pavillon de Chasse* : and, I must own, that never did a more exquisitely luxurious dwelling meet my eye. It was not large, but all was disposed for ease and pleasure. Piles of cushions, rich carpets, easy chairs, Persian sofas, exquisite tapestries, filled every chamber. Books, too, and pictures were there, but the books and the pictures were generally of one class. Catullus, Ovid, Petronius, or Tibullus, lay upon the tables or on the shelves ; while the walls were adorned with many a nymph and many a goddess, liberal of their charms : though, at the same time, Horace and Virgil appeared cast upon one of the sofas ; and, every now and then, the eye would fall on one of the sunshiny landscapes of Claude de Lorraine, and dream

for a moment amidst the sleepy splendour of his far perspectives.

“And is it possible !” said I, turning to the Marquis as he led me through this luxurious place, “is it possible that you can quit such a spot willingly, for the dangers and hardships of war ?”

“There are various sorts of pleasure,” replied he, “and without varying, and changing, and opposing them one to another, we cannot enjoy any long. Every man has his particular pleasures, and his particular arrangement of them. I, for instance, require the stimulus of war, to make me enjoy these luxuries of peace. But you have yet seen little of the beauties of the place. Let us go out into the park. The perfection of a place of this kind depends, almost entirely, upon the grounds that surround it.”

The two days that I spent at the pavilion of Monsieur de St. Brie, passed like lightning. Not a moment paused, for he contrived to fill every hour with some pleasure of its own ; but it was all too sweet. One felt it to be luscious.

Like the luxurious Romans, he mingled his wine with honey, and the draught was both cloying and intoxicating.

On the third morning, I rose early from my bed to take a review of the beautiful grounds which surrounded the house; and after wandering about for half an hour, I turned to a river that ran through the park, resolving to take my way towards the house by the side of the waters. The path that I followed was hidden by trees, but there was a transverse alley that came down to the water, and joined the one in which I walked, about one hundred yards farther on. As I advanced, I heard the voice of the Marquis talking earnestly with some other person; and, though at first what he said was very indistinct, yet I soon heard more without seeking to do so or indeed wishing it. "Hold him down," said the Marquis, "when you have got him safely on the ground, and cut his throat just under the jaws — if you go deep enough he is dead in a moment."

As he gave this somewhat bloody direction, he turned into the same path with myself, ac-

accompanied by another person, whose appearance is worthy of some description. He was about my own height, which is not inconsiderable, but, at the same time, he was remarkably stout—I should say even fat, with a face in which a great degree of jollity and merriment was mingled with a leering sort of slyness of eye, and a slight twist of the mouth, that gave rather a sinister expression to the drollery of his countenance. He wore short black mustachios, and a small pointed beard; and from his head hung down upon his shoulders a profusion of black wavy hair. His dress also was somewhat singular. Instead of the broad low-crowned plumed hats which were then in fashion, his head was surmounted with an interminable beaver, whose high-pointed crown resembled the steeple of a church. We have seen many of them since amongst the English and the Swiss, but, at that time, such a thing was so uncommon, and its effect appeared so ridiculous that I could scarce refrain from laughing, though my blood was somewhat chilled with the conversation I had just overheard. The

rest of this stout gentleman's habiliments consisted of a somewhat coarse brown pourpoint, laced with tarnished gold, and a slashed *haut de chausse*, tied with black ribbons: while a huge sword and dagger ornamented his side, and a pair of funnel-shaped riding-boots completed his equipment.

The Marquis's eye fell upon me instantly, and, advancing without embarrassment, he embraced me and gave me the compliments of the morning. Then turning, he introduced his friend, Monsieur de Simon. "The greatest fisherman in France," said he; "we were speaking just now about killing a carp," he continued, "which you know is dreadfully tenacious of life. Are you a fisherman at all?"

I answered, "not in the least," and the conversation went on for some time, on various topics, till at length Monsieur de Simon took his leave.

"I am sorry you cannot take your breakfast with us," said the Marquis, "but remember when I am gone, you are most welcome to fish, whenever you think fit, upon my property."

“ I thank you, I thank you, most noble Marquis,” said the other, with a curious sort of rogueish twinkle of the eye, “ I will take you at your word, and will rid your streams of all those gudgeons that you dislike so much, but which I dote upon. Oh, ’tis a dainty fish—a gudgeon !”

At about one o’clock my horse was ready, and I took leave of the Marquis ; I cannot say, with feelings either of reverence or regard ; and I have always found it an invariable fact, that when a man has amused us without gaining our esteem, and pleased without winning our confidence, there is something naturally bad at the bottom of his character, which we should do well to avoid.

As I mounted my horse, I remarked that my worthy valet Houssaye had imbibed as much liquor as would permit him to stand upright, and that it was not without great difficulty and scrupulous attention to the equipoise that he at all maintained his vertical position.

“ Your servant is tipsy,” said the Marquis,

“ you had better leave him here till he recovers his intellects.”

“ I am as sober as a priest,” hickupped Houssaye, who overheard the accusation the Marquis brought against him, and recalled it with the most drunken certainty of his own sobriety. “ Monseigneur, you do me wrong. I am sober, upon my conscience and my trumpet.” So saying, he swung himself up to his horse’s back, and forgetting to wait for me, galloped on before, sounding a charge through his fist, as if he was leading on a regiment of horse.

The Marquis laughed; and once more bidding him adieu, I followed the pot-valiant trumpeter, who, without any mercy on his poor horse, urged him on upon the road to Lourdes as fast as he could go. Very soon, I doubt not, he quite forgot that I was behind, for, following much more slowly, as I did not choose to fatigue my jennet at the outset, I soon lost sight of him, and for half an hour perceived no traces of him whatever.

I have heard that the effect of the fresh air,

far from diminishing the inebriation of a drunkard, greatly increases it. Probably this was the case with Houssaye, for at the distance of about four miles from the park of the Marquis, I found him lying by the side of the road, apparently sound asleep, while his horse was calmly turning the accident of his master to the best account, by cropping the grass and shrubs at the road-side.

This accident embarrassed me a good deal, for I had set out late; and, of course, I could not leave the poor drunkard to be gnawed by the bears, or devoured by the wolves, whose regard for a sleeping man might be found of somewhat too selfish a nature. After having shaken him, therefore, two or three times for the purpose of recalling him to himself, without producing any other effect than an inarticulate grunt, I returned to a village about a mile nearer Bagneres, and having procured the aid of some cottagers, I had the overthrown trumpeter carried back, and left him there in security, till he should have recovered from the

state of intoxication in which he had plunged himself.

All this delayed me for some time, so that it was near four o'clock before I again resumed my journey. Nor was I sorry, indeed, that the sun had got behind the mountains, whose long shadows saved my eyes from the horizontal rays, which, as my way lay due west, would have dazzled me all along the road, had I set out earlier. In about two hours it began to grow dusk, and I put my horse into a quicker pace, lest the family at the chateau should conclude that I intended to remain another night. There was one person also that, I knew, would be anxious till they saw me return safe; and, for the world, I would not have given Helen a moment's unnecessary pain. What made her suspect the Marquis of any evil designs towards me I knew not, but I knew that she did suspect him, and that was sufficient to make me hurry on to assure her of my safety.

There is a thick wood covers the side of the mountain about five miles from the chateau de

l'Orme, extending high up on the one hand, very nearly to the crest of the hill, and spreading down on the other till the stream in the valley bathes the roots of its trees. In a few minutes after I had entered this wood, I suddenly heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs close behind me — so near, it must have sprung out of the coppice. I instantly turned my head to ascertain what it was, when I received a violent blow just above the eyebrow, which nearly laid my skull bare, and struck me headlong to the ground, before I could see who was the horseman.

Though bruised and dizzyed, I endeavoured to struggle up; but my adversary threw himself from his horse, grappled with me, and cast me back upon the ground with my face upwards. Oh! how shall I describe the fearful struggle for life that then ensued?—the agonizing grasp with which I clenched the hands wherewith he endeavoured to reach my neck—the pressure of his knees upon my chest—the beating of my heart as I still strove, yet found myself overmastered, and my strength failing—the dreadful, eager haste with which he tried

to hold back my head, and gash my throat with the knife he held in his hand—and the muttered curses he vented, on finding my resistance so long protracted.

Five times he skook off my grasp, and five times I caught his hands again, as they were in the act of completing his object. At the same time, I could hear his teeth cranching against each other with the violence of his efforts. My hands were all cut and bleeding, his dress was nearly torn to pieces, the strength of both was well nigh exhausted, when we heard the sounds of voices advancing along the road. Though our struggle had hitherto been silent, I now called loudly for assistance. He heard the noise also : “ This then shall settle it,” cried he, raising his arm to plunge the knife into my chest, but I interposed my hand, and though the force with which he dealt the blow was such as to drive the point through my palm, yet this saved my life, for before he could repeat the stroke the horsemen had come up, attracted by the cries I continued to utter. One of them sprang from his horse; beheld the

deathly struggle going on, and not knowing which was the aggressor, but seeing that one held the other at a fatal disadvantage, called to my assailant instantly to desist or die. The assassin again raised his arm; the horseman saw him about to strike—levelled a pistol at his head—fired—and the murderer dropping the weapon from his hand, staggered up upon his feet—reeled for a moment, and then fell dead across my chest.

CHAPTER XV.

OH life ! thou strange mysterious tie between the spirit and the clay ; what is it makes the bravest of us shrink from that separation which the small dagger or the tiny asp can so easily effect !

For a moment I lay to recover myself from all the agitated feelings that hurried through my heart, and then struggling up, I rolled the ponderous mass of the dead man from off my breast, and rose from the ground.

“Is it Count Louis de Bigorre?” said the voice of the Chevalier de Montenero. I answered that it was ; and he proceeded, “I thought so ; infatuated young man, why would you trust yourself in the hands of your enemy,

when you were warned of his cruelty and his baseness ?”

“ Because,” I answered, “ I thought that a person who had done injustice to me, might also do injustice to him.”

“ When a man has the means of clearing himself, and does not choose to do so,” replied the Chevalier, well understanding to what I alluded ; “ he must rest under the imputation of guilt till he does. Now, Sir, I leave you. Arnault, give him your assistance, and rejoin me to-morrow morning :” and so saying, without farther explanation, he turned his horse and galloped away.

Though the evening light was of that dim and dusky nature, which affords, perhaps, less assistance to the eye than even the more positive darkness of the night, yet I could very well distinguish by the height and form, that the person the Chevalier called Arnault was not the little, large-headed, procureur of Lourdes, but rather his son ; and as soon as we were alone, he confirmed my conjecture by his voice, asking if I were hurt.

“Not much, Jean Baptiste,” replied I; “my hands are cut, and he has grazed my throat with his knife; but he has not injured me seriously. Catch my horse, good Arnault!” I continued, “and ride on to the cottage, about half-a-mile on the road—bring some one with lights, that we may see who this is—though in truth I guess.”

“You had better take my pistols, Monsieur le Comte,” said the honest youth, “lest there should be a second of these gentlemen in the wood.”

I took one, and leaving him the other for his own defence, sent him on as fast as possible to the cottage, for although, from the manner in which my assailant had attempted to effect my death, so like the Marquis de St Brie's directions for killing the carp, I had little doubt in regard to whom I should find in the person of the dead man, yet I wished to ascertain the fact more precisely, that no dubitation should remain upon my mind in regard to Monsieur de St. Brie himself.

Soon after Jean Baptiste was gone, the moon

began to raise her head over the mountain ; and, streaming directly down the road, showed me fully the person of the dead man, through whose head the ball of the Chevalier's pistol had passed in a direct line, causing almost instantaneous death.

All doubt was now at an end ; there lay the large heavy limbs of the man, who had been called Monsieur de Simon, while his steeple-crowned hat appeared rolled to some distance on the road. The effects of the dreadful struggle between us were visible in all his apparel. His doublet was torn in twenty different places with the straining grasp in which I had held him, and an immense black wig, which he had worn as a sort of disguise, had followed his hat, and left his head bare. In rising I had rolled him off me on his back, so that he was lying with the beams of the moon shining full in his face.

I advanced and gazed upon him for a moment ; and now, as he appeared with his shaved head, and the fraise, or ruff torn off his neck, I could not help thinking that his countenance

was familiar to me. The mustachios and the beard, it was true, made a great alteration, but in every other respect it was the face of the Capuchin, who had joined in attempting to plunder me at Luz. I looked nearer, and remembering that in six months his beard would have had full time to grow, I became convinced that it was the same.

As I examined him attentively, I perceived a sort of packet protruding from a pocket in the breast of his doublet, and taking it out I found it to be a bundle of old, and somewhat worn papers, wrapped in a piece of sheepskin, and tied round with a leathern thong.

Amongst these I doubted not that I should find some interesting correspondence between the subordinate assassin and his instigator, and consequently took care to secure them; after which I waited quietly for the return of Jean Baptiste, who I doubted not would relieve me from my troublesome guard over the dead body, as soon as he could procure lights and assistance. His absence of course appeared long; but after the lapse of about ten minutes I began

to perceive some glimmering sparks through the trees, and a moment after the inhabitants of the cottage appeared, men and children, with as many resin candles as their dwelling could afford.

Jean Baptiste was with them; but another personage of much more extraordinary mien led the way, bearing in his hand a candle about the thickness of his little finger, but which he brandished above his head in the manner of a torch, striding on at the same time with enormous steps, and somewhat grotesque gestures. "Where is the body?" exclaimed he with a loud tone and vast emphasis, "Where is the body of the sacred dead?"

The person who asked this question was a man of about five foot three in height, fluttering in a pourpoint, whose ribbons and rags vied in number, while the brass buttons with which it was thickly strewed, might, by their irregularity of position, have induced me to believe him to be a poet, had not his theatrical tone and air stamped him as a disciple of Thespis.

" 'Percé jusqu' au fond du cœur
D'une atteinte imprévue, aussi-bien que mortelle.' "

cried he, when he beheld the dead body. "Oh what would I have given to have been here when he was killed. Did he fall so at once—I beseech you tell me, did he fall thus?" and down he cast himself upon his back, in the attitude of the dead body.

If any thing could have rendered so dreadful a sight as the corpse of the murderer with his blackened temples, clenched hands, and cold meaningless glare of eye, in any degree ridiculous, it would have been to see the little player cast upon the ground beside the vast bulk of the dead man, striving to imitate the position in which he had fallen; and every now and then raising his pert head from his mockery of death's stillness, and peeping over the corpse to see how the arm or the hand had fallen in dying.

I was in no mood, however, for such fooleries; my head ached violently from the blow I had received above the eye; my hands, especially the one that had intercepted the stab of the knife, gave me intolerable pain. I was fatigued also, and fevered with the struggle and the agitation, so that my corporeal sensa-

tions were not at all favourable to the wretched player's buffoonery, even had the scene been one that admitted of merriment.

Stirring him then rather rudely with my foot, I bade him rise and assist in carrying the body to the cottage. Up started the actor in a moment, and, taking the corpse by the feet, replied he was ready to do any thing the manager bade him: one of the cottagers lent his aid, and we soon reached the cottage with our burden. Here all the women made a vast outcry at the sight of the dead body, but more still on beholding the state in which the assassin's efforts had left their young Count Louis, for I was now within the old domain of our own Chateau.

I know not whether from the loss of blood, or the irritating pain of the wounds, but I certainly felt very faint, and probably my countenance showed how much I was suffering, for while the young Arnault and some others were examining the person of the dead man, and taking what papers and effects he had upon him, the player stepped forward, and offered to render me his assistance as a surgeon.

Thinking that the devil of buffoonery still possessed him, I repulsed him somewhat rudely ; but yet unrepelled, he laid his hand upon his heart, made me a low bow, and said, “ Listen, noble youth, scion of an illustrious house, and you shall hear that which shall make you yield yourself to my hands, as willingly as Maladine gave herself up to Milsenio. Know then, before my superior genius prompted me to fit on the buskin, I trod the stage of life in a high-heeled shoe, not indeed the Cothurnus ; far, far from it, for in those days, alas ! though I was clothed in tragic black, and held the dagger and the bowl, I shed real blood behind the curtain, and inflicted my cruelties on the real flesh and blood ”

“ I begin somewhat to understand you,” I replied ; “ but if you would have me attend to you seriously, my friend, you must drop that exalted style, and speak common sense in common language.”

“ Well then, Sir, I will,” he answered, instantly changing his tone, and taking one which strangely blended in itself insignificance and

sharpness, but which harmonized much better with his little eager countenance and twinkling black eyes, than his tumid, bombastic loudness had done. "What I mean is, that before I went on the stage, I studied under an apothecary. My disposition is not naturally cruel, and I was not hard-hearted enough to succeed in that profession. Now, though with the devil's assistance and my master's skill, I aided in conveying many a worthy patient from their bed to their coffin, yet I think I remember some few simples which would allay the irritation of your wounds, and I will undertake for their innocuousness."

No surer aid was at hand, and therefore I willingly allowed the metamorphosed apothecary to bandage up my forehead with such applications as he thought fit, as well as to use his skill upon my hands; and certainly the ease which I derived from his assistance, fully repaid the confidence I had placed in him.

In the mean while the body of the murderer had been searched, and the various objects found upon him, being brought to me, proved to con-

sist of nothing more, besides the packet of papers which I had already taken, than a few pieces of gold, one or two licentious letters and songs, a pack of cards, some loaded dice, a missal, two short daggers, and a rosary, all articles very serviceable in one or other of his callings. One of the cottage-boys had by this time caught the horse which this very respectable person had ridden, and strapped upon it behind was found what at first appeared a cloak, but which proved, upon examination, to be a Capuchin's gown, confirming my opinion in regard to the owner's identity with the card-player at Luz.

When this examination was over, I prepared to mount my horse and proceed home, but before I went, I turned to gaze once more upon the lifeless form of my dead adversary; and in looking upon his clumsy limbs and obesity of body, I could not understand how he could have so easily overcome me, endowed, as I felt myself to be, with equal strength and far superior agility. The sudden surprise could alone have been the cause, and I resolved through my

future life, to struggle for that presence of mind, which in circumstances of danger and difficulty, is a buckler worth all the armour of Achilles. After this, I bestowed a gold piece upon the player-apothecary for the ease he had given me, and bade him come over to the Chateau de L'Orme the next day for a farther reward, and then escaping as fast as I could from his hyperbolical thanks, I mounted, and accompanied by Jean Baptiste, rode on towards my home.

My first question, as we went, was how long the Chevalier had returned from Spain, and what had brought him on the road towards Lourdes at that time of night. At first, Jean Baptiste seemed somewhat reserved, but upon being pressed closely on the subject, his frank nature would not let him maintain his silence; and he informed me, that the Chevalier had returned that very morning from Spain; but that on hearing that the Marquis de St. Brie had been received as a visitor at the chateau, and that I, in return, had gone to pass some time with him, he had desired the young procureur to accompany him and set out for Bagneres without

delay, saying that I must be saved at all risks. "But still," continued Jean Baptiste, "you have done something in Spain to lose the Chevalier's love; for though he would come away after you to-night, in spite of all my father could do to prevent him, he always took care to say, 'for his father's sake — for his mother's sake, he would rescue Count Louis from the dangers into which he was plunged.'"

The gloomiest knell that rings over the fall from virtue, must be to hear of the lost esteem of those we love. That must be the dark, the damning scourge which drives on human weakness to despairing crime. Could the great fallen angel ever have returned? I do not believe it. The glorious confidence of Heaven was lost, and mercy would have been nothing without oblivion.

I felt that my friend did me wrong, but even that did not save me from the whole bitterness of having lost his regard. And I internally asked myself, what would my feelings have been, had I really merited his bad opinion?

“Where is the Chevalier?” demanded I.
“Is he at his own house?”

“No,” answered the young man; “he is at my father’s, at Lourdes.”

My determination was taken immediately, to ride over to Lourdes the next day, and explain to the Chevalier my conduct, as far as I could with honour; to represent to him, that I was under a most positive promise not to disclose to any Spaniard the events of that night wherein his suspicions had been excited, and to add my most solemn asseverations to convince him of my innocence. My pride, I will own, struggled against this resolution, but still I saw, in the Chevalier’s conduct towards me, a degree of lingering affection, which I could not bear to lose. The good spirit triumphed; and I determined to sacrifice my pride for the sake of his esteem.

These thoughts kept me silent till our arrival at the Chateau de L’Orme, where my appearance in such a state, I need not say, created the most terrible consternation. But I will pass by all that; suffice it, that I had to tell my story

over at least one hundred times, before I was suffered to retire to bed. Helen, happily, was not present when I arrived, but my mother's embroidery woman did not fail to wake her, as I afterwards heard, for the purpose of communicating the agreeable intelligence, and doubtless made it a thousand times worse than it really was. My poor Helen's night, I am afraid, was but sadly spent.

However, when I had satisfied both my father and mother that I was not dangerously injured, and related my story to every old servant in the family, who thought they had a right to be as accurately informed in regard to all that occurred to Count Louis as his confessor, I retired to my chamber; and while the *maître d'hôtel* fulfilled the functions of Houssaye in assisting to undress me, I opened the packet I had found upon the monk, and examined the papers which it contained, but to my surprise I found nothing at all relating directly to the Marquis de St. Brie.

The first thing that presented itself was a regular certificate of the marriage of Gaston Fran-

çois de Bagnol, Count de Bagnol, with Henriette de Vergne, dated some seventeen years before, with the names of several witnesses attached. Then followed a paper of a much fresher appearance, containing the names of these witnesses, with the word *dead* marked after one, and the address of their present residence affixed to each of the others. Then came a long epistolary correspondence between the above Count de Bagnol and various persons in the town of Rochelle, at the time of its siege; by reading which I clearly found that the unfortunate young nobleman, though influenced by every motive of friendship or relationship to give his aid to the rebellious Rochellois, had constantly refused to do so, and that in consequence the accusation, which the Chevalier informed me had been brought against him, must have been false. On remembering, also, the cause of enmity which the Marquis de St. Brie had against him, and associating that fact with the circumstance of my having found these papers on the body of an assassin hired by the same man, I doubted not for a moment that the charge had

been forged by the Marquis himself, and these letters withheld on purpose to prevent the Count from establishing his innocence. Why the Marquis had let them pass from his own hands I could not divine; without, indeed, he considered them as valueless, now he had taken care that the justice or injustice of this world could no way affect his victim. I knew that he was far too much a lover of this life alone to value, in his own case or that of others, the cold meed of posthumous renown.

Long before I had finished these reflections and the reading of the letters, the *maître d'hôtel*, who, as I have said, supplied Houssaye's place, had done his part in undressing me; and soon, after ordering my horse to be ready early, I dismissed him and slept.

Before closing this chapter, however, I must remark that, for many reasons, I had restricted to the safe guardianship of my own breast the various reasons that led me to suppose the Marquis de St. Brie had instigated the attack under which I had so nearly fallen. The suspicions of both my parents turned naturally in that

direction, but I well knew that if my father had possessed half the knowledge which I did upon the subject, he would have allowed no consideration to prevent his pursuing the Marquis with the most determined vengeance, to the destruction perhaps of all parties. I therefore merely described the attack, but withheld the circumstances which preceded it; and though there are few actions in a man's life which do not either afford him regret or disappointment, this piece of prudence is amongst the scanty number I have never had cause to wish undone.

CHAPTER XVI.

I SLEPT soundly and I rose refreshed, although my hands were very stiff, and my head was not without its pains from the rude treatment that each had undergone. No one in the house was up when I woke, and saddling my own horse as well as I could, I left word with the old gardener that I should return before the hour of breakfast, and set out for Lourdes.

If I was not always very considerate in forming my resolutions, as the wise axiom recommends, I was certainly not slow in executing them: and I now proceeded at full speed to fulfil my determination of the night before in regard to the Chevalier. Stopping at Arnault's house, I threw myself off my horse and entered

his *étude*, which appeared to be just opened ; nor did the least doubt enter my mind that the person I sought was still there.

The first thing, however, that I perceived was the enormous head of the old Procureur himself, looking through the sort of barred screen that surrounded his writing-table, like some strange beast in a menagerie. I was not very much inclined to treat this incubus of the law with any great civility on my own account, as I was aware that, for some reason to himself best known, he bore me no extraordinary love ; but as Helen's father, he commanded other feelings, and I therefore addressed him as politely as I could.

In answer to my enquiries for the Chevalier, he bowed most profoundly, replying that the Monsieur de Montenero would be quite in despair when he found that I had come to honour him with a visit only five minutes after his departure.

“What ! is he gone already ?” cried I.
“When did he go ? where did he go to ?”

“He is indeed, I am sorry to say, gone,

“Monsieur le Comte,” replied the Procureur; “and in answer to your second interrogatory, I can reply, that he has been gone precisely nine minutes and three quarters; but in regard to the third question, all I can depone is, that I do not at all know—only that he spoke of being absent some three months or more.”

Angry, vexed, and disappointed, I turned unceremoniously on my heel; and as I went out, I heard a sort of suppressed laugh issue through the wide unmoved jaws of the Procureur, whose imperturbable countenance announced nothing in the least like mirth; and yet I am certain that he was at that moment laughing most heartily at the deceit he had put upon me; for, as I afterwards learned, the Chevalier was in his house at the very time.

The distance between Lourdes and the chateau was narrowed in a moment; and on my arrival, I found the domestic microcosm I had left behind sound asleep an hour before, now just beginning to buzz. My father had not yet quitted his own room, but the servants were all

bustling about in the preparations of the morning ; and as I rode up, old Houssaye himself recovered from his drunkenness, sneaked into the court like a beaten dog — not that he was at all ashamed of having been drunk — it was a part of his profession ; but upon the road he had heard my adventures of the night before detailed in very glowing language ; and he justly feared that the indignation of the whole household would fall upon his head for having been absent in the moment of danger.

Beckoning him to speak to me, I gave him a hint that I had been tender of his name, and that, if he chose to keep his own counsel, he might yet pass scathless from the rest of the family. “ I shall punish you myself, Maitre Houssaye,” continued I, “ for I *will* teach you to get drunk at proper times and seasons only.”

“ As I hope to live,” answered the trumpeter, “ I did but drink two cups ; and you well know, Monsieur, that two cups of wine to me, or the *maître d'hotel*, who have drunk so many hundred tuns in our lives, is but as a cup of cold water to another man. They must have been

drugged those two cups, — for a certainty they must have been drugged.”

At breakfast, I found Helen with my father. They were alone, for my mother was ill from the agitation of the night before, and had remained in her own chamber, desiring not to be disturbed. The moment my step sounded in the vestibule, Helen's eyes darted towards the door, and I could see the flush of eagerness on her cheek, and the paleness that then overspread it, as she saw my head bound up; and then again the blood mounting quickly, lest any one should see the busy feelings of her swelling heart. It was a mute language which I could read as easily as my own thoughts; but still I would have given worlds to have been permitted to hear and speak to her with the openness of acknowledged love. The breakfast passed over. Helen left the hall; and after a few minutes' conversation, my father went to the library, while I gazed for a moment from the window, meditating over a thousand hopes, in all of which Helen had her part — letting thought wander gaily through a thousand mazy

turns, like a child sporting in a meadow without other object than delight, roaming heedlessly here and there, and gathering fresh flowers at every step.

As I gazed, I saw the figure of Helen glide from the door of the square tower, and take her way towards the park.—Now, now then was the opportunity. She had promised not to avoid me any longer. Now then was the moment for which my heart had longed, more than language can express; and snatching a gun, to excuse the wanderings, which indeed needed no excuse, I was hastening to pour forth the multitude of accumulated feelings, and thoughts, and dreams, and wishes, which had gathered in my bosom during so many months of silence, when I was called to speak with my father, just as my foot was on the step of the door.

I will own, that if ever I felt undutiful, it was then. However, I could not avoid going, and certainly with a very unwilling heart I mounted the stairs, and entered the library. My father had a letter in his hand, which I soon found came from the Countess de Soissons,

and contained a reply favourable to my mother's request, that I might be placed near the person of the Prince, her son, so well known under the name of *Monsieur le Comte*. My father placed it in my hands, and seemed to expect that I should be very much gratified at the news ; but I could only reply, as I had done before, that I had not the least inclination to quit my paternal home, without, indeed, it was for the purpose of serving for a campaign or two in the armies of my country. " Well, Louis," replied my father, thinking me doubtless a wayward and whimsical boy, " if you will look at the *proscriptum*, you will perceive that you are likely to be gratified in that point at least, for the Countess states that his Highness, her son, though at present at Sedan, from some little rupture with the Court, is likely to receive the command of one of the armies. However, take the letter, consider its contents, and at dinner, let me know when you will be prepared to set out."

Glad to escape so soon, I flew out into the park in search of my beautiful Helen. It was

now a fine day in the beginning of May, as warm as summer — as bright, as lovely. Nature was in her very freshest robe of green ; the air was full of sweetness and balm ; and as I went, a lark rose up before my steps, and mounting high in the sunshine, hung a far speck upon its quivering wings, making the whole air thrill with its melodious happiness. I love the lark above all other birds. Though there is something more tender and plaintive in the liquid music of the nightingale, yet there seems a touch of repining in its solitude and its gloom : but the lark images always to my mind a happy and contented spirit, who, full of love and delight, soars up towards the benificent heaven, and sings its song of joy and gratitude in presence of all the listening creation.

All objects in external nature have a very great effect upon my mind ; whether I will or not, they are received by my imagination as omens. And catching the lark's song as a happy augury, I sped on upon my way. As much had been done as possible to render the park, which extended behind the chateau, regular

and symmetrical ; but the ground was so uneven in its nature, so broken with rocks, and hills, and streams, and dells, that it retained much more of the symmetry of nature than any thing else ; which after all, to my taste, is more beautiful than any thing man can devise.

If Helen had wandered very far from the house, it would have been a difficult matter to have found her, but a sort of instinct guided me to where she was. I thought of the spot, I believe, which I myself would have chosen for lonely musing—a spot where a bower of high trees arched over a little cascade of about ten feet in height, whose waters, after escaping from the clear pool into which they fell, rushed quickly down the slanting ravine before them, nourishing the roots of innumerable shrubs, and trees, and flowers, and spreading a soft murmur and a cool freshness wherever they turned.

Helen was sitting on the bank over which the stream fell, and though she held in her hand some piece of female work, which, while my mother slept, she had brought out to occupy

herself in the park ; yet her eyes were fixed upon the rushing waters of the fall. At that moment, catching a stray sunbeam that found its way through the trees, the cascade had decorated itself with a fluttering iris, which, varied with a thousand hues, waved over the cataract like those changeful hopes of life, which hanging bright and beautiful over all the precipices of human existence, still waver and change to suit every wind that blows along the course of time. My footstep was upon the green sward, so that Helen heard it not, and she continued to sit with her full dark eyes fixed upon the waterfall, her soft downy cheek resting upon the slender, graceful hand, which might have formed a model for the statuary or the painter ; and her whole figure leaning forward with that untaught elegance of form and position, which never but once *did* painter or statuary succeed in representing.

When she did hear me she looked up, but there was no longer the quick start to avoid me, as if she feared a moment's unobserved conversation. Her cheek, it is true, turned a shade

redder, and I could see that she was somewhat agitated; but still those dear, tender eyes turned upon me, and a smile that owned she was happy in my presence, broke from her heart itself, and found its way to her lips.

“Dear, dear Helen,” said I, seating myself beside her, “thank you for the promise that you would not avoid me; and thank you for its fulfilment; and thank you for that look, and thank you for that smile. Oh, Helen! you know not how like a monarch you are, in having the power, by a word, or a glance, or a tone, to confer happiness, and to raise from misery and doubt, to hope, and life, and delight.”

“Indeed, Louis!” answered she in a very different manner from that which I had ever seen in her before—“if I do possess such power, I am not sorry that it is so; for I am sure that while it remains with me to make you happy, you shall never be otherwise.—You think it very strange,” she added with a smile, “to hear me talk as I do now; and I would never, never have done so had not circum-

stances changed. But they have changed, Louis; and as I now see some hope of —” She paused a moment, as if seeking means to express herself, and I saw a bright, ingenuous blush spread over her whole countenance. “Why should I hesitate to say it?” she added, “as I see some hope now of becoming your wife, without entering into a family unwilling to receive me. I know not why I should not tell *you* also *this* that has made me so happy.”

“A thousand and a thousand thanks, dearest Helen,” answered I; “but tell me on what circumstance you, who once doubted my parents’ consent so much more than I ever did, now found expectations so joyful—let me say, for us both.”

“You must not ask me, Louis,” answered Helen; “the only reason that could at all have influenced me to withhold from you what I hoped — what I was sure would make you happy, was, that I felt myself bound to be silent on more than one subject. You cannot fancy how I dislike any thing that seems to imply

‘mystery and want of confidence between two people that love one another ; and indeed it is the ‘greatest happiness I anticipate in being yours, that then I shall have neither thought, nor feeling, nor action, that you may not know—but in the present case you must spare me. Do not ask me, Louis, if you love me.”

Of course, however much my curiosity might be excited, I put no farther question, merely asking as calmly as I could, fearful lest I should instil some new doubts in Helen’s mind, if she was sure, very sure, that the joyful news she gave me was perfectly certain, for, I owned that it took such a burden from my heart, I could scarce believe my own hopes.

“All I can say, Louis,” answered she, “is, that I feel sure, neither your father nor your mother will object to our union when the time arrives to think that it may take place—of course we are yet far too young.”

“Too young !” said I ; “ why too young, dear Helen ?”

“Oh, for many reasons,” she answered, smiling : “you have yet to ningle with the

world ; at least so I have heard people, who know the world, say that it is necessary for a young man to do before he dreams of marriage. You have to see all the fair, and the young, and the gay, which that world contains, before you can rightly judge whether your poor Helen may still possess your heart."

"And do you doubt me?" demanded I. "Helen, you have promised me never to give your hand to another ; and, without one doubt or one hesitation, do I promise the same to you—by yourself—by my hopes of happiness in this world or the next—by all that I hold sacred—"

"Hush ! hush ! dear Louis !" replied she ; "do not swear so deeply. There are many, many temptations, I have heard, in the great world, which are difficult for a young man to resist—Louis, have you not found it so already?"

There was a peculiar emphasis in her question, which surprised and hurt me ; but in a moment it flashed through my mind—the Chevalier had communicated his suspicions of me to Arnault, and Arnault had taken care to

impart them to his daughter. I stood for a moment as one stupified — then, taking her hands in mine, I asked, “Helen, what is it that you mean? Can you—do you in the least believe me guilty?”

“No, Louis — no, dear Louis!” answered she, with a look of full, undoubting, unhesitating confidence; “if all the world were to declare you guilty, mine should be the dissenting voice; and I would never, never believe it — I will not deny that tales have reached me, which I do not dwell on, because I am sure they are false — basely, ungenerously false, or originating in some mistake which you can correct when you will, and will correct when you ought. Do not explain them to me — do not waste a word or a thought upon them, as far as I am concerned,” she added, seeing me about to speak, “for I believe not a word of them — not one single word.”

Oh, woman's love! It is like the sunshine, so pure, so bright, so cheering, and there is nothing in all creation equal to it! I threw my arms round her unopposed — I pressed my

lips upon hers ; but the kiss that I then took was as pure as gratitude for such generous affection could suggest — I say not that ~~it~~ was brotherly, for it was dearer—sweeter ; but if there be a man on earth who says there was one unholy feeling mingled therein, I tell him, in his throat, he lies !

At that moment the figure of a man broke at once through the boughs upon us. Helen turned, and, confused and ashamed at any one having seen her so clasped in my arms, fled instinctively like lightning, while the intruder advanced upon me in a menacing attitude.—It was Jean Baptiste Arnault ; and with a flushed cheek and a raised stick he came quickly upon me, exclaiming, “ Villain, you have seduced my sister, and, by the God above, your nobility shall not protect you !”

“ Hear me, Arnault !” cried I ; but he still advanced with the stick lifted, in an attitude to strike. My blood took fire. “ Hear me,” repeated I, snatching up my carbine,—“ hear me, or take the consequences ;” and I retreated up the hill, with the gun pointed towards his breast.

Mad, I believe — for his conduct can hardly be attributed to any thing but frenzy — he rushed on upon me without giving time for any explanation and struck a violent blow at my head with his stick. I started back to avoid it; my foot struck against an angle of the rock; I stumbled: the gun went off, and Arnault, after reeling for a moment with an ineffectual effort to stand, pressed his hand upon his bosom, and fell lifeless at my feet.

CHAPTER XVII.

THERE is nothing like remorse:—it is the fiery gulch into which our passions and our follies lash us with whips of snakes. What language can tell the feelings of my bosom, while I stood and gazed upon the lifeless form of Helen's brother, as he lay before me slain by my hand? And oh! what words of horror and of agony did I not read in every line of that cold, still, mindless countenance, as it glared at me with an expression still mingled of the anger which had animated him, and the pang with which he had died.

It was terrible beyond all description. My whole heart, and mind, and brain, and soul, was one whirl, of dreadful sensations. I had

done that which it was impossible to recall—I had taken from my fellow-being that which I could never restore—I had extinguished the bright mysterious lamp of life: and where, oh! where could I find the Promethean flame wherewith to light it again to action and to being?

In vain! The irrevocable deed had gone forth; and sorrow, and tears, and regret, and agony, could have no more effect upon it than on the granite of the mountains that surrounded me. It was done! It was written on the book of Fate! It was between me and my God,—a dreadful account, never to pass from my memory. I felt the finger, that had branded *murderer!* on the brow of Cain, tracing the same damning word in characters of fire upon my heart. And yet I gazed on, upon the thing that I had made, with horror amounting to stupefaction. Like the head of the Gorgon, it seemed to have turned me into stone; and though I would have given worlds to have banished it for ever from my sight and my memory, I stood with my eyes fixed upon it

as if I sought to impress every lifeless lineament on my remembrance with lines that time should never have power to efface.

A heavy hand, laid upon my shoulder, was the first thing that roused me; and turning round, I beheld Pedro Garcias, the Spanish smuggler, standing by my side. The discharged gun was still in my hand; the bleeding corpse lay before me; and had he had occasion to ask who had done the deed, whose consequences he beheld, I am sure that my countenance would have afforded a sufficient reply. No one but a murderer could have looked and felt as I did.

“How did this happen?” asked he bluntly, and without giving me either name or title; for no one could look upon the humbling object before us, and cast away one name of honour upon earthly rank. For a moment, I gazed upon the smuggler wildly and vacantly; for the strong impression of the thing itself had almost banished from my mind the circumstances that preceded it; but recollect-

ing myself at length, I gave him a scarcely coherent account of what had happened.

“You should not have seduced his sister,” replied the smuggler, fixing his large dark eye upon me. “You men of rank think that the plain *bourgeois* feels not such a stain upon his honour as the loss of his child’s or of his sister’s virtue. But they do! — they do, as bitterly, as keenly, as madly, as the proudest Count that ever spread his banner to the wind.”

“Seduce his sister! — seduce Helen!” cried I, turning quickly upon him. “It is false! Who dares to say it? I would not wrong her for a world—not for a thousand worlds!”

“That changes the case,” replied the smuggler. “He wronged you then, and deserved to die.—But come away from this spot. Fie! do not look so ghastly. We shall all wear his likeness one day, and it matters little whether it be a day sooner or a day later.—But come along to the mill. Harm may come of this: for his father will not want friends to pursue this deed to the utmost.—Come, come! You

shall not stay here, and risk your life too. One dead man is enough for one day at least. — Come !”

So saying, he hurried me away to the mill, where we found the door⁴ apparently locked, the wheel at rest, and the miller out ; but on tapping three times, thrice repeated, we were admitted by the miller, who seemed somewhat surprised to see me with Garcias. The event that had driven me there was soon told ; and after a consultation between the two, it was agreed that beyond all doubt, I might compromise my own life, and the security of my family, by remaining in France. How far they were right, would have been difficult to determine, even had my mind been in a state to have examined the question. The privileges of the nobility were great, but not such as to have secured my immunity, if it could have been proved that the homicide had been intentional. Nothing remained for me according to their showing, but once more to try the air of Spain, till such time as my pardon could be obtained, which might indeed be long ; for it had lately

been the policy of the prime minister, to strike every possible blow at the power of the nobility; and to show less lenity towards any member of their body, than to those of the common classes. Little did I heed their reasoning on the subject. The conclusion was all that reached my mind, and the idea of there being an absolute necessity for my quitting the country was in itself a relief. Even to think of remaining in those scenes was horror; and to have met Helen's eyes, after slaying her brother, would have been a thousand times worse than death.

“Come, cheer up, Count Louis!” cried Garcias; “I did not think to see so brave a heart as yours overset by a thing that happens to every one now and then.—Give him a horn of La Mancha brandy, Señor Miller; ’twill comfort his heart, and get rid of such foolish qualms. In the mean while, I will go out and see after the body. If no one has come near it, and I can get it down to the river, I will cast it in below the fall. The waters are full, and it may go down for ten or fifteen miles, so

that nobody will hear more of it, and the Count may stay in his own land. But if they have discovered the business, our young Seigneur must lie here till midnight, and then be off with me into Spain. I shall meet my good fellows in the mountains: and then the *douaniers* who would stop us must have iron hands and a brazen face.

I let them do with me whatsoever they liked. It seemed that those fine ties which connect the mind and the body were so far broken or relaxed, that the sensations of the one had no longer their effect upon the other. My heart was on fire, and my thoughts were as busy as hell could wish; but I scarcely saw, or heard, or knew, what was passing around me; and I let Garcias and the miller manage me as if I had been an automaton, without exerting any volition of my own. I drank the raw spirit that the miller gave me, and indeed it might as well have been water. I suffered him, when Garcias was gone, to pour on his consolations, which fell cold and heavy upon my ear, but found not their way to my heart. Nor indeed did he

seem to understand the cause of that despairing melancholy in which I was plunged, attributing my grief to fear of the consequences, or to dislike to quit my country. I had not the spirit even to repel such a supposition, though my feelings were very, very different. The absorbing consciousness of guilt prevented me at first from even remembering or thinking of the impassable barrier now placed between me and Helen. That was an after-thought, infinitely painful, it is true, but it came not at once. The only thought which occupied me, if indeed thought it can be called, was the mental endeavour to qualify the bitterness of my feelings, by remembering that the act which had so suddenly plunged me into misery was not a voluntary one; and I had continually to reiterate, to press upon my own mind, that it was accidental, and to call up the memory of every painful circumstance, in order to assure myself that I was practising no self-deception. Then too came the consciousness that I had pointed the gun, and a thousand times I asked myself, what would have been my conduct had I not stua-

bled over the rock. — Would I have fired? Would I have refrained? I know not! and still my own heart condemned me, and branded me with the name of murderer.

It seemed long, long ere Garcias came back; for to those who despair, as well as to those who hope, each minute lingers out an age. When he came, he brought the news that the body had been removed before he had arrived at the spot; and that, by creeping on behind the trees, he had caught a glimpse of the persons that bore it, who were evidently proceeding towards the chateau.

As he spoke, I covered my eyes with my hands, as if to shut out the view of Helen's first sight of her brother's corpse. She had fled so fast at the first sound of footsteps, that she could not have known who it was had approached; but now she would see him, bleeding from a wound by my hand; and by the place where he was found, she would easily divine who was the murderer. It wanted but that thought to work up my agony to the highest pitch, and it burst forth in a torrent of passionate tears.

“Fie! fie!” cried Garcias. “Señor, are you a man? I would not, for very shame, have any one see you look so womanly. You have slain a man! Good! Had you not good cause? Were he alive again, and were to offer you a blow, would you not slay him again? If you would not, you are yourself unworthy to live; for the man that outlives his honour, is a disgrace to existence. A man once told me, I lied,” continued the smuggler, advancing and laying his gigantic hand upon my arm, to call my attention; while the dark fire flashed out of his eyes, as if his heart still flamed at the insult. “He told me, I lied! We were sitting in a peaceful circle upon the green top of the first step of the Maladetta, where it juts out over the plain, with a precipice two hundred feet high. He told me I lied, in the presence of the girl I loved;—he told me I lied;—and I pitched him as far into the open air, as I have seen a hurler cast a disk.—I can see him now, sprawling midway between heaven and earth, till he fell dashed to atoms on the rocks below. And think you that I give it one vain regret, one

weak womanish thought? Did we stand there again, with the same provocation, I would send him again as far—ay, farther, were it possible. —Come, come,” he added ; “ no more of this ! —Miller, give him another cup of consolation.”

The smuggler took perhaps the best way of teaching me to bear the weight of what I had done, by showing me that there were others who walked under it so lightly. Wondering at his coolness, yet envying it, I took another and another cup of the spirit, till I began to find some relief, and could look around me and gain some knowledge of the external objects. It was then I perceived the reason why the miller had been so slow in admitting us. The whole place was strewed with various contraband goods, which had not yet been deposited in their usual receptacle, which was apparently an under-chamber, reached by a trap-door in the floor of the mill, so artfully contrived that it had escaped even my eyes in my frequent visits to the place.

It now stood open, and no sooner did Garcias perceive that the brandy and his conversation

had produced some effect upon me, than pointing to a low bed in one corner, he advised me to lie down and go to sleep, while he helped the miller to conceal the salt and other prohibited articles with which the floor was encumbered. I said I could not sleep, and he made me take a fourth cup of brandy, which soon plunged me at least into forgetfulness.

How long I lay I know not, but when I woke the interior of the mill was quite dark, except where a moonbeam streamed in through a high window and fell upon the dark gigantic figure of Garcias standing with the miller near the door, apparently in the act of listening. At the same time a high pile of salt, moved to the edge of the trap-door, but not yet let down, proved that the smugglers had been interrupted in their employment. In an instant a tremendous knocking, which had most probably been the cause of my waking, was repeated against the mill-door, and a voice was heard crying, "If you do not open the door, take the consequences, for I give you notice that I shall break it open; I am Francois Derville, officer of his

Majesty's *douanne*, and I charge you to yield me entrance!"

"Ay, I know you well," muttered Garcias to himself, "and a bold fellow you are too.—See, miller, by the loop-hole," he continued, in the same under-tone,—“see whether there is any one with him?"

The miller climbed up to a small aperture high in the wall, which apparently commanded a view of the door; and after looking through it for a moment, while the blows were reiterated on the outside, he descended, saying, "He is alone; I have looked all up the valley and no one is near him; but I see he has got an iron crow to break open the door."

"He will not try that when he knows I am here," said Garcias; and elevating his voice to a tone that drowned the knocking without, he added, "Hold! Derville, hold! I am here,—Pedro Garcias,—you know me, and you know I am not one to be disturbed; so, go away about your business, if you would not have worse come of it."

"Pedro Garcias, or Pedro Devil!" replied

the man without, "what matters it to me? I will do my duty. Therefore, let me in, or I will break open the door;" and a heavy blow of his crow confirmed this expression of his intention.

"The man is mad!" said Garcias, with that calm, cold tone which very often in men of stormy passions announces a more deadly degree of wrath than when their anger exhausts itself in noisy fury;—"the man is mad!" and stooping down he took up one of the heavy wooden mallets with which he had been breaking the salt.

In the mean while the blows without were redoubled, and the door evidently began to give way. "Take care what you are doing!" cried Garcias, in a voice of thunder; "you are rushing into the lion's den!" Another and another blow were instantly struck, the door staggered open, and the douannier stood full in the portal.

Garcias raised his arm—the mallet fell, and the unhappy officer rolled upon the floor with his skull dashed to atoms, like an ox before the

blow of the butcher. He made no cry or sound, except a sort of inarticulate moan, but fell dead at once, without a struggle.

“Good God ! what have you done ?” cried I, starting from the bed where I had hitherto lain, and approaching Garcias.

“Punished a villain for breaking the law of every civilized land :” replied the smuggler, “for no country authorizes one man to infringe the dwelling of another without authority ; and he had no authority or he would have shown it. At least,” he added, in a lighter tone,—though, perhaps, what he did add, proceeded from a more serious feeling, for that dark and wily thing, the human heart, thus often covers itself, even from ourselves, with a disguise the most opposite to its native character ;—“at least, I hope he had none. At all events, he knew well what he was about : I warned him beforehand : and now,—I think he will never break into any one’s house again.—Shut the door, miller, and let us have a light.”

The coolness with which he contemplated the body of his victim produced very strange and

perhaps evil impressions in my breast. Certainly, in that small, silent court of justice which every man holds within his own breast, both upon his own and upon other people's actions, I condemned the deed I had seen committed; and I found myself too, guilty: but his crime seemed so much more enormous than mine, that the partial judge was willing, I am afraid, to pardon the minor offender. But it was the example of his calmness that had strongest effect upon me; and I began to value human life at less, since I saw it estimated so low by others.

Neither Garcias nor the miller seemed to give one thought of remorse to the deed; the miller speaking of it in his cool, placid manner; and Garcias treating it as one of those matters which every man was called to perform at some time of his life. Both of them also justified it to themselves as an act of absolute necessity for their own security.

To what crime, to what folly has not that plea of necessity pandered at one time or another in this world? From the statesman to the pick-purse; from the warrior to the cut-throat, all,

all, shield themselves behind necessity from the arrows which conscience vainly aims at the rebellious heart of man.

The question now became how to dispose of the body, but the smuggler soon arranged his plan, with an art in concealing such deeds which, though doubtless gained in the wild hazardous traffic he carried on, I own, made me shudder with associations I liked not to dwell upon. Without any apparent reluctance, he raised the corpse in his arms, and carried it out to a crag that overhung the stream, having an elevation of about an hundred yards perpendicular. Underneath this point were several masses of rock and stone, a fall on which would infallibly have produced death, with much the same appearances as those to be found on the body of the douannier. But without trusting to this, Garcias carried the body to the top of the rock, and cast it down headlong upon the stones below, which it spattered with its blood and brains, and then, rolling o'er into the river, was carried away with the stream. The next thing was to cast down the iron crow, which might

have been supposed to drop from his hand in falling; and then the smuggler broke away a part of the mould and turf that covered the top of the rock, leaving such an appearance as the spot would have presented had the ground given way under the officer's feet.

All this being done, he returned to the mill, and telling me that it would soon be time for us to set out, he applied himself to concluding the work in which he had been disturbed by the arrival of the douannier, as calmly as if the fearful transactions of the last half hour had left no impress upon his memory. The only thing that might perchance betray any regret or remorse was the dead silence with which he proceeded, as if his thoughts were deeply occupied with some engrossing subject.

At length, however, he turned to the miller: "Come, give me a horn of the *aguardente*!" cried he, with a sigh that commented on his demand, "and stow away those two lumps of salt yourself.—Have you put the door to rights? It will tell tales to-morrow if you do not take heed: and wipe up that blood upon the floor."

So saying, he cast his gigantic limbs upon a seat, mused a moment or two with a frowning brow ; and I thought I could see that he strove to summon up again, in his bosom, the angry feelings under which he had slain his fellow-creature, to counterbalance the regret that was gaining mastery over his heart. His lip curled, and his eye flashed, and, tossing off the cup of spirits which the miller proffered, he cast his mantle across his shoulders and prepared to set out.

Had he shown no touch of remorse, there would have existed no link of association between his feelings and mine ; but I saw that though his heart had been hardened in scenes of danger and guilt, it was still accessible to some better sensations. There was also a similarity in the events which had that day happened to us both, that created a degree of sympathy between us ; and I rose willingly to accompany the smuggler, when he announced that he was ready to depart.

To my surprise, however, he turned not towards the door by which we had entered, but

going into a small sort of closet, in which appeared a variety of sacks, and measures, and other accessories of a miller's trade, he bade me do precisely as he did. For my part, I saw no means of exit from that place, but I found that there were more secrets in the mill than I had dreamed of. Choosing out a large spare millstone, that lay upon the floor of the closet, Garcias mounted thereon, and dropped his arms by his sides, when instantly the stone began to sink under his weight, and he disappeared by degrees like some gigantic genius in a fairy tale. The miller handed him a lantern the moment he had descended, sufficiently to be clear of the hole through which the stone had sunk. He then jumped off the millstone, which rose up rapidly in its place counterbalanced by some other weight; and on my stepping upon it, it again descended with me, when I found myself in a sort of cave, whether artificial or natural I know not, but which ran some way into the rock under the mill. The Miller followed with a key, and a gourd fashioned into a bottle, which he bestowed upon me, and which

I afterwards found to be full of brandy. He then opened a small door which gave us egress close to the water-wheel ; and bidding him farewell, we issued forth, and in a moment stood in the moon-light by the side of the river.

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